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FROM MOOR ISLES.

A LOVE STORY.

BY

JESSIE FOTHERGILL,

AUTHOR OF

"THE FIRST VIOLIN," "KITH AND KIN," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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PART I.

FROM MOOR ISLES.



CHAPTER I.

“THEN GOOD-NIGHT, ALAS!”

ONE night, late in October, when it was pitch dark, moonless, starless, and black, a soft, moist westerly wind, with just a slant of south in it, was playing a wild but melodious symphony over the great stretches of moorland, and across miles of bleak northern country, as it came with a soft but tremendous rush up a rough, uphill road, and rising ever into a deeper roar, seemed to give a leap as it reached the summit of the long brow, and encountered

a wild, upland sweep, over which it could and did tear rejoicingly, whistling, calling, and crying from hill to hill, till it struck the great blunt, square head of Ravenside, the huge buttress which at that point shuts off Lancashire from Yorkshire. Smiting this mighty hill-top, it ruffled the heather, and laid low the forests of bracken, which thickly clothed his mighty sides, and tried to soften the grim outline of his dark head, and then it tore lustily onwards. There was joy and hope and life in it, for all its boisterous roughness.

In the course of its career upwards and onwards, towards Ravenside, and along the rough lane just mentioned, it only encountered one human figure, and that figure it did not succeed in knocking down. The time was half-past twelve, midnight; the lane was two miles from Hollowley station, and the solitary who was plodding

along, from the town and towards the country, was a young man, one Brian Holgate, who went regularly every week, during the autumn and winter months, to the concerts held in the great manufacturing city some twenty-five miles distant from Hollowley, and walked at midnight from that enterprising town to the hamlet of Thornton-in-Ravenside, or Thornton, as it was always called—a good three and a half miles, mostly uphill, and, after the borough of Hollowley itself was passed, unlighted by art of man. Whoso wished for light along that road must carry his own lantern, but Brian never had recourse to this assistance. His home, the old house which belonged to him, and in which he lived alone, Moor Isles by name, was at the end of this three and a half miles, just on the outskirts of the village of Thornton-in-Ravenside.

He had accomplished more than two miles of his three and a half, and he seemed to be in no hurry to get to the end of his journey. Brian was young—only just over three and twenty ; it mattered little to his robust health and untried nerves, nourished by the keen moorland air and simple country fare which had all his life been his portion, if they missed a night's rest, or half of it, once a week. Had that one night's exertion been all the strain which he put upon his youth and strength, there would have been nothing in his condition to call for either surprise or commiseration.

He plodded on, his hands in his pockets, his long light overcoat flung open at the chest—for the encounter with the mild autumn tempest left him warm, not cold. He knew the way by long experience, dark as it was ; and it was more uncon-

sciously than consciously that he turned now to this side and now to that, to avoid the inequalities, or rough and stony bits of which he was aware, in the road ; pursuing the easiest, if most irregular, way, feeling nothing but pleasure and exhilaration in the roughness of the wind, the darkness and loneliness of the night.

As he climbed thus homewards, his voice sounded out on the wings of the wind ; snatched away sometimes, almost before it had left his lips ; at others, driven back into his throat by some capricious gust. The snatches of melody which this voice sent forth on an errand to the top of Ravenside had certainly never sounded there before. Ravenside summit, bald, square, and bleak, had long ago been a favourite resort of the unholy community of wizards, witches, imps, and elves of evil nature, and of their black master himself—

so the legend ran, and it was a legend which no one in Ravenside Forest ever thought of questioning—it was not told as a legend, but as a matter of fact, in many a farmhouse all over that country side. Details might be had by any ingle, of the *Walpurgis-nacht* orgies and revels of which that mountain top had been the scene. Witches had assuredly existed there once; had not a waxen image, stuck over with pins, tumbled one day out of a nook in the great chimney of Rough Launde, one of the oldest farms in the vicinity showing what black arts had been practised there?

And the strains which now rolled, in a rich, if not highly cultivated baritone voice, must, if they ever succeeded in reaching the summit of the hill, have been potent to arouse any lingering shades of olden times which might still hover, or sleep, or weep there—for they were bound

up in a tale connected more or less with these very revels—just now Brian lifted his head, and sang with all his might, and with a swing of intense, almost rapturous enjoyment—

“ ‘ Towns with their high battlements,
 Tower and wall—
 Fair maids with their haughty thoughts,
 Scorning us all—
 To glory they call us,
 Soon they both shall fall, shall fall—
 Soon they both shall fall.’ ”

“ H’m—m ! ” the voice sank deeper, and hummed away softly—then took up snatches. “ ‘ *Jam nox stell-a-a-a-ta, velamina pandit; nunc bibendum et amandum est.*’ . . . h’m—m—m ! ” Then, in a loud, triumphant swell, “ ‘ *Gaudeamus igitur, gaudeamus ! . . . Cesares dicamus, veni, vidi, vici. Gaudeamus igitur !*’ ”

“ Grand ! ” he muttered to himself; “ grand, by Jove ! Why does it ever

come to an end? There dwelt a king once in Thule"—his voice sank into melting accents—"pah! I hate women's songs in men's voices. She sang it superbly, though. . . . But, after all, I'm not sentimental. Felix has it. What a voice! what an artist, and—ay, what a man, surely!"

And his head swayed to and fro in remembrance of a wildly rocking measure, while he sang:—

“ ‘ Dear Kath’rine, why
To the door of thy lover
Drawest thou nigh?
Why there timidly hover?

“ ‘ Ah, sweet maiden beware!
Come away, do not enter!
It were folly to venture—
It were folly to venture—
Come away, nor enter there.’

“ It’s a maddening thing, when it once gets into your head—if I could sing it like

that ! It's mortally sad, though. How does it go ?

“ ‘ Ah, heed thee well, fair lass,
Lest thy lover betray thee—
Thy lover—thy lover betray thee.

“ ‘ Then good-night, alas !
From ill-hap what shall stay thee ?
Then good-night, then good-night, then good-
night ! ’ ”

he shouted, giving his voice full swing, and sending it loose upon the wind. He sang no more connected phrases, but, as he plunged along through the darkness, kept shooting out disjointed notes, the burden of it all being still the same—

“ ‘ Then good-night, alas !
From ill-hap what shall stay thee ?
Then good-night, then good-night, then good-
night ! ’ ”

It came with a lingering, reluctant, and long-drawn note, as he glanced aside to where a small steady light shone through

a window close to the road, and the dim solid mass of a house seemed to make itself almost more felt than seen in the inky darkness. He made no mistakes, but with unerring touch laid his hand on the latch of a wooden gate, at one side of the house, and went along a walk shaded by trees to the front; for this old house, like many another built at the same period, had its back to the high road, while its front rooms looked far away over woods and fields to the smoky town in the vale, Hollowley, justly so called, and, beyond the smoke, to where there stood another circle of blue sentinel moors.

Brian had a key to his own front door. As he fitted it into the lock, a joyful whimpering greeted him from within, and, when he pushed the door open, there emerged from a parlour on the right hand a superb silky collie, fawning, waving his

tail, welcoming, with shining eyes and affectionate curves of his beautiful body, his careless, but never unkind lord and master.

“ Hey, Ferran ! ” said Brian, kindly, as he patted the creature’s head for a moment, then shut the door, and followed it into the room, where a red fire burnt low—where a table was spread with some simple eatables, and where a lamp was shining steadily. An old-fashioned, wooden-bottomed chair with a rounded back stood near the fire, and on the chair lay a fiddle-case. The collie went up to this chair and sat down before it, and looked at Brian, with a wag of his tail and a shrewd smile, as if to say, “ Here I’ve been ever since you left, and it’s all safe and sound. You can look and see.”

“ Good lad ! ” said the young man, absently, as he turned the lamp a little

higher, cut a slice off the piece of cheese, and a junk from the loaf, and, seizing a bottle, poured some brandy into a tumbler, and added cold water to it. And still he seemed unable to rid himself of the air and of the words which haunted him ; still he kept softly singing :—

“ ‘Then good-night, alas !

From ill-hap what shall stay thee ?

Then good-night, then good-night, then good-night !”

He began to eat, but did not make much progress with it—lifted the tumbler to his lips, then set it down again.

“Nay,” he murmured to himself. He had something of a habit of talking to himself, as solitaries have, now and then. “That doesn’t go down after this night’s music. How I wish I always felt like this !”

And, leaving the table, he drew forward a music-stand, and opened a score, and

with loving hands drew the fiddle from its case, and laid it affectionately against his breast. But before beginning to play, he went to the window, and opened it wide, and then, seating himself once more, drew the bow across the strings, and with that one action, and the sound that resulted, proved, to any that might have had ears to hear, the touch and the soul of a born musician.

For a very long time Ferran and he and the fiddle had it all to themselves. It was after three when at last, with a reluctant sigh, he replaced the noble old instrument in its case, shut the window, turned out the lamp, and with the violin case in his hand, and Ferran at his heels, climbed up the narrow stair of his old house, to his room and to his bed. Scarcely had he laid his head upon his pillow, after hearing Ferran, with a long, satisfied sigh compose himself

on the mat outside, than he fell asleep, of course, but even as he lost consciousness the words still lingered on his lips—

“From ill-hap what shall stay thee?

Then good-night, then good-night, then good-night!”

CHAPTER II.

ALICE ORMEROD.

LONG before Brian Holgate awoke on the morning after his concert, his neighbours at the farm, and Sarah Stott, his old retainer and housekeeper and his solitary indoor servant, were up and doing. A lovely autumn morning had followed on the gusty damp night—only enough of the late gale remained to blow away the mist and fogs from about the ridges and tops of the moors and hills.

At half-past ten in the forenoon life and the business of the day were in full swing at “Ormerod’s farm,” occupied by Farmer John Ormerod, his daughter Alice, his

cripple son Andrew, and their helps and retainers, consisting of a stalwart, rosy-cheeked country lass of twenty, in the house ; and sundry men and boys without : herds, hinds, helps, and such as pertain to the outdoor workings of a moderately-sized, and prosperous grazing farm, for little grain flourished anywhere in that bleak country.

Travelling over the high road along which Brian had last night trudged so late, one arrived first at the back door of Moor Isles, his own house. At one side, a gate opened into a walk, with the house side on the left, and on the right a high stone wall with trees of a very fair growth for that part of the country, hanging in a pleasantly shaded manner above the walk, and making an arch overhead. Turning to the left one came to the front of the house, with its door in the middle, its window on

either side ; three windows above, and three small arched ones higher again. It was built of gray stone, this little unpretentious old country mansion ; the door and windows were painted a spotless white, there was a gleaming brass knocker, and a little flight of worn stone steps, always washed very clean, and with the edges skilfully whitened by the careful hand of Sarah Stott. No one was stirring about the front at this hour. The house looked due south, and there was a Dijon rose climbing round one of the windows, with still a few belated blossoms left. Some asters of different colours were in the borders just beneath the windows. The garden sloped rather steeply from this little terrace in front of the house. First came strawberry beds, then a level of grass with a walk all round it, and one across the middle. In each oblong of grass stood

a tall, spindly old rhododendron bush, and another flight of steps led to the last and largest portion of the garden, which was well stocked with such fruit trees as will yield produce in so northern and bleak a climate—raspberries, gooseberries, and currants chiefly, and a few hardy apple trees dotted here and there. It was all very small, very homely and unpretending, but it had a genial look in all weathers—it bore the aspect of a home, and it shared, with one human being, the deepest and intensest affection of Brian Holgate's heart.

There was a great view from the front of the house, of the smoky town of Hollowley, with its endless forest of tall chimneys, and beyond them more ridges of moor. Moor Isles (probably a corruption of Moor Hoyles, or Holes) had descended from father to son of the Holgates for generations, and before it another and a

smaller dwelling had stood on the same site, and had belonged to the family for several hundred years.

But to return to the high road. Close beside the gate leading into Brian's garden—beneath the wall of his garden, in fact—ran a deep, rough lane—a “cow-lane” leading to the pastures where Ormerod's cattle lived and moved, and had their being, and serving as their road when they came up to the farmyard to be milked. The farm itself was just on the other side of this lane, on a level with Brian's house and garden. A high wall divided the farmyard also from the lane, and it too was a pleasant, genial spot, with its deep stone porch leading into a grand country kitchen, from which access was obtained to a staircase and a parlour, the latter seldom used, but not quite so ghastly in appearance as most parlours of that class.

But with the parlour we have nothing to do. Here, in this huge raftered kitchen, with its stone floor, its vast cavernous fireplace and ingle; its adjuncts of daily use, harmoniously blended into a homely beauty; its cosy nooks, its broad, low windows and deep window-seats—here are the objects of interest for us.

A young woman and a youth were the only occupants of the warm, cosy place. Fine though the day was, there were dark, shadowy corners in this great kitchen, and the firelight flickered gaily in them, though it was but eleven o' the clock before mid-day.

Alice Ormerod, the ruler and mistress of the farm, was standing at a dresser which was in front of one of the windows, and she was busy with flour and butter and milk; a baking-board and a rolling-pin were in constant requisition, and an array

of pie-dishes before her were piled up with fine damsons, all glittering from the bowl of water in which she had been stirring them round to cleanse their skins. Andrew, her brother, sat at a little round table in another of the windows looking south, and nearer to the fireplace. He looked small and crumpled up ; his crutch was beside him—a book and papers, pen and ink before him on the table. And at the moment they were silent.

No greater contrast could well have been imagined than that offered by this brother and sister. Alice was twenty-three, and Andrew was twenty years of age. She was tall, strong, and perfectly made ; she possessed a frame so justly proportioned and so harmoniously finished, that one did not realize at first that she was what might be called a big woman. Upright as a dart, and without any stiff-

ness of carriage, her movements were free and graceful. Her lilac print gown was made with great simplicity, but had some pretensions to shape and cut, and fitted closely over the nobly sweeping shoulders and beautiful bust. Her figure was more that of a Diana than of a Hebe, Venus, or Juno—spare, though not lean; with admirable, strong muscles playing beneath her fair, healthy skin, and firm, not too abundant flesh. And the face that went with this figure was the face of a brune, with rich subdued red glowing through the clear olive skin, tanned nut-brown by the busy out-of-doors life of the summer and harvest time; dark, straight eyebrows, over eyes of a deep fine gray, and long black lashes; a mass of straight, glossy hair, brown, not black—a most distinct, decided brown, silky and smooth, with here and there a tawny reflection where it

caught the sunlight ; and a noble, steady, kindly mouth, with capacity for sternness, for pathos, for invective or persuasion—for everything except lies or meanness. A chin, strong but not coarse, finished off this face well, and the whole head was set on a round, firm throat, which just now was browned by the sun and air.

The details are the details of a beauty's appearance, but Alice Ormerod did not strike one as being a beauty, though handsome she undoubtedly was. Perhaps it was the spirit within, which, being nobler than its frame, caused one to think less of her beautiful face and form in particular than of the general effect of health and strength, rightheadedness, steady daylight of mind and spirit. Be that as it may, she had certainly all the beauty, all the health and strength for both of them. Poor Andrew had been a cripple from his birth,

and suffered sadly from an infirmity of the spine which, while not amounting to an acute disease, was sufficient to keep him in such pain for hours, and even days and nights at a time, as quite to incapacitate him for active work of any kind.

Perhaps one should except active mental work. The lad's brain was quick enough ; and he could never be kept too busy with books and studies. He was deep now in some zoological work of a popular kind, busily making notes, and trying to answer questions for an examination paper, and happily unconscious for the time that he had a weak back and a short leg, and that he could not move without a crutch.

So they kept one another company—silent, but in the best of harmony and sympathy—the fire crinkled and sparkled ; the great clock ticked ceaselessly. Andrew studied the characteristics of the somewhat

insipid protozoa, and Alice deftly mixed and rolled paste, tucked it over one pie-dish after another, and now and then tried to hum a tune—not very successfully, and yet, perhaps, a highly sympathetic ear might have detected a resemblance in her somewhat tuneless murmur to Brian's stave of the night before—

“Then good-night, then good-night, then good-night !”

The murmur suddenly died into silence as footsteps became audible on the flags of the yard outside ; then a figure stopped before the window and smiled at her, and Brian's voice wished her good morning.

“Good day, Brian,” said she, in a clear loud voice. “Don't stand in my light, but find your way in, if you've anything to say.”

“I have so,” he answered, in an emphatic tone, as he passed to the door.

In the momentary interval Alice drew

a deep breath, and exhaled a prolonged, noiseless sigh. Her fingers manipulated one particular piece of pie-crust with great vigour, and then—the door was opened, and Brian, with his frank, handsome face, his blue eyes, and his sunny hair and moustache, “fresh as paint”—to use his own expression—and looking no whit the worse for his late hours, lifted the latch and walked in. Andrew roused from his absorbing interest in his study, and looked up, his face brightening.

“Eh, good morning!” said he.

“Good morning, Andrew. How are you, old chap? Hard at work over your learned books! I never did see such a fellow as you are. Good morning, Alice,”—with a very pleasant smile upon the young woman. “Do I interrupt?”

“Not that I know of, if you’ll mind what you’re doing,” she said, in rather a

crisp tone. "Sit you down there in th' rocker, and let's hear what it's all about."

"Oh, I can't tell you from all that distance off!" he said, disdainingly the proffered rocking-chair, and drawing near to the dresser. He seated himself, wrong way about, on one of the wooden-bottomed chairs, clasped his hands over the top rail of its back, and looking up at her, with an expression composed of mirth, dismay, and doubt, remarked tersely—

"Eh, I am in a fix, Alice. I'm fairly at my wits' end."

"Why, what now?" she asked with seeming indifference. "Whatever have you been doing? Not——"

She paused, looking at him, the rolling-pin in her hands, arrested on its way to the layer of paste on the baking board.

"Nay," he answered her, with a smile, as he looked straight into her eyes;

“nothing o’ the sort this time. I didn’t even drink a drop of brandy-and-water before I went to bed. And I was up late, too.”

“Ay, you were so,” she replied. “I heard your fiddle at after one in the morning.”

“Why——”

“Yes; you always throw open the window, and I always sleep with mine open, you know, and I woke up,” she went on, a little more quickly, “I woke up, and thought it must be getting on for morning, and then all at once I heard your fiddle going, and you were playing, too.”

“To be sure!” he cried, waving his hand, and trolling forth—

“‘ Towns with their high battlements,
Tower and wall !
Fair maids with their haughty thoughts
Scorning us all !
To glory they call us,
Soon they both shall fall.’ ”

You hear that, Alice Ormerod? 'Soon they bo-oth shall fall.' By George! what a concert it was last night!"

"If that's a song you heard, it sounds heathenish enough. Pray, is that in one of your operas?"

"Not an opera—no. That comes from a piece called 'The Damnation of Faust,' by a Frenchman, Hector Berlioz! Ay, that's music!"

"Well, that was what I heard you at, I suppose; and I then heard the clock on the stairs strike two in the morning, and then I went to sleep again."

"That was a sensible thing to do. But you haven't heard what trouble I'm in. '*Jam nox stellata—stell-a-a-ta.*'"

"You sound as if you were," she retorted. "I haven't any time to waste. What is it that's wrong?"

"In this wonderful piece of music you

must know there are four principal singers—a lady and three gentlemen. The lady sings soprano, the gentlemen tenor, baritone, and bass. Well, you know, I've heard it before, and I've heard them in it before. I know two or three of the musicians in Mr. Warburton's band—a little, not much," he went on, modestly. "They are very kind to me. They give me hints about my voice sometimes, and about my fiddle too."

"They call your voice a baritone, too, don't they?" asked Alice, striving not to look excessively pleased and interested.

"Yes, they do. And this man who sings the baritone part in 'Faust'—the wicked spirit's part—Mephistopheles, he's called, if you want to know——"

"Meph-is-toph-eles. I shall try to remember that. Well, what of him?"

"What of him?" echoed the young

man, pausing ; and then, with a face eager with excitement, and with the ready tears of his emotional temperament rushing to his eyes, though they did not overflow—“ why, he’s simply splendid. There never was such a man as Felix—his real name is Felix Arkwright—but, you know, they often twist their names about a little for public purposes ; but that doesn’t matter,” he added, finishing his rapid parenthesis—“ that’s nothing to do with it ; ‘ he’s simply the rarest man in the world ! ’ That’s Shakespeare—you haven’t read Shakespeare ? But that’s what he is. The greatest artist, and the finest gentleman, and young, quite young. Why do you cast your eyes down in that way, and look displeased ? You know nothing about it—how can you ? ” he concluded, pettishly, falling from his rhapsody into a huff.

“I’m not displeased,” she said, but there was gravity in her tones. “He must be a very wonderful man, if he’s all that. But what does it all lead to?”

“What does it all lead to? Why, to this. Last night I was introduced to him—in the interval between the two parts of the concert—and he shook hands with me, and said he’d heard about my voice—and my violin—from Brown, you know, one of the second violins, who knows him. He has been very kind to Brown.”

“And is that a trouble to you?”

“Nay; I never was so proud and pleased in my life. I tell you, when he looked at me with those eyes of his, and spoke to me so open and so kind, I fairly trembled. I felt so small beside him. And yet, before we parted, I had—what do you suppose, now, Alice and Andrew, that I had done?”

“Offered to sing to him, perhaps?” suggested Andrew, while Alice smiled.

“Andy, I’ll give you something to remember me by, if you don’t mind. Offered to sing to him, indeed! I’m not quite made up of self-conceit. No, but I had invited him to come out here and see me.”

This news, when at last it came, had its full effect. His auditors were silent in awe and astonishment. Though belonging to a musical and music-loving race, neither Alice nor her brother had the musical faculty, and their sole ideas on the subject were derived from what they had heard at local musical gatherings. Brian, with his wild enthusiasm on the subject, his fiddle, his voice, his persevering attendance at the great Irkford concerts through all weathers and at all times, was a great mystery to them. But he was their friend,

their delight, and their admiration; their gallant young neighbour, who was a favourite in spheres of which they knew nothing, and who yet was always to them the same genuine, simple, brotherly creature; and they received his dictum on all such matters as a final one. If Brian had said this or that about anything relating to music, it was so. There was no appeal. He had said that this Felix was the rarest man in the world—the greatest artist, the finest gentleman.

Of course he knew all about it, and if he had invited this admirable Crichton to come and see him, of course that was an important matter. It was Alice who first recovered presence of mind enough to say—

“Eh, did you though? And what did he say?”

“He said he would come to-morrow.”

“Well, that’s all right.”

“He doesn’t often have the time for such things. He’s singing again to-night, at Bolton, or somewhere there, but nowhere on Saturday—not because he hadn’t been asked, you may be sure, but because he didn’t choose. He preferred to take a holiday. And sometimes he likes to go off quietly to out-of-the-way places, where no one knows him, and he heard that Moor Isles was such a place, and I told him it would be the proudest day of my life if he would come. And he said, ‘It’s exceedingly kind of you. I will come with pleasure.’ And he asked me not to ask any one to meet him.”

“And of course it was easy enough to agree to that,” said Alice.

“Ay. But that isn’t all; for when we’d arranged it all, he stopped and thought a minute, and then he said, ‘Would it be

an abuse of your hospitality” — Brian raised himself up, and put on a commanding air, which impressed them very much — “‘ if I were to bring two ladies with me ? ’ ”

“ Eh, my sakes ! Lasses ! That’s a different story,” cried Andrew, intensely interested.

“ Not a bit of it, lad. It’s only a continuation of the same story. I said, ‘ Sir, as many of your friends as you choose to bring shall be welcome in my house as flowers in May.’ He smiled most kindly, and said, ‘ Oh, I am not altogether unconscionable. But I know it would be a very great pleasure to these ladies if I might bring them with me.’ And, of course, I said that my pleasure in seeing them would be beyond description. So they’re coming.”

“ I wonder if they’re singers, too,” speculated Andrew, while Alice was silent,

not looking quite so brilliantly pleased as she had been a moment ago. "Them singing ladies, I've heard," pursued the youth reflectively, "are that full of airs and graces, there's no holding them, and wherever they go, they must have porter and cream mixed, to drink."

"I know nothing about that. If they want porter, there's plenty at my house; and if they want cream, I suppose there's some here that won't be grudged me."

"Well, but," interposed Alice, rather abruptly, "it seems to me like as if we were a long while in getting to the point, if there is any. If you've asked them, and they're coming, and you think so much of them, where's your trouble?"

"Oh, Alice! it isn't me," said the young man, his voice suddenly changing, and a shade of something like despair settling on his face—"it isn't me. It's Sarah Stott."

There was a pause, and then Alice, laying down her rolling-pin, leaned against the lintel of the window and laughed—laughed till the tears ran down her face. Andrew joined in a more moderate manner in the mirth, and Brian, his arms still folded on the back of the chair, looked from one to the other, with a gloom of expression which nothing seemed to lighten.

“It’s all very well, Alice,” said he, “for you, that are young and strong, and mistress of all around you, to laugh. But what would Andy do, I’d like to know, if he wanted to have his friends, and he’d a Sarah Stott, that sat down in the kitchen rocking-chair, and told him it couldn’t be done?”

“Couldn’t be done!” repeated Alice, her laughter suddenly ceasing. “What couldn’t be done?”

“I’d totally forgotten her when I gave the invitation; and when I told her this morning, instead of rising to the occasion, and trying to think what could be done, she just gets into a temper, and, as I tell you, she sat herself down in the rocking-chair, and she says, ‘You’ve gone and invited all these folk at a moment’s notice, without asking me a word about it—people as it’ll take a week to prepare for properly. It can’t be done,’ she says. ‘You may as well send ’em word at once as it can’t be done. *I* shall none be ready for ’em.’ And she’ll be as good as her word. You know Sarah Stott, Alice; you know what she can be, when she takes it into her head,” he added piteously.

“Ay, I do so,” Alice assented. “Sarah is a good servant, but a bad master. You’ve let her get the mastery, Mr. Brian, and she makes you feel it. In her proper

place she's all right, but she can be as spiteful as any one I know. Are they coming just for the day, these people?"

"That's all. I said I could find them bed and board if they liked, but Mr. Felix said they were all engaged on the Sunday. So they'll be here about one—not before, and I guess they can't stay much after six, if they want to get back in decent time. And I did think as that could have been managed. Mr. Felix has seen a deal of grand doings and fine folk, but he's so simple and nice—he'll not turn up his nose at anything. And I'm sure the ladies will be equal to him, whoever they may be. But you might as well say so to that pie-dish as to Sarah, when once she's made up her mind against a thing. I don't know what in the world I'm to do," he added dejectedly; and he presented the spectacle of a strong man in bondage to a

female yoke—the sad, but not uncommon sight—a master the slave of an ancient retainer. “I never thought, till she took it in that way, but what it could have been managed,” he said sorrowfully.

Where were now the war-like ditties and the mystic serenades? Where the pride of his youth and his manhood? Prostrate and paralyzed before the ultimatum of Sarah Stott!

“And it can and shall be managed,” said Alice, suddenly and decisively. She pushed her baking-board aside, and sat down in a chair opposite to him. Her face was flushed; her eyes bright; her breath came quickly. She looked the embodiment of strength, resolution, and the capacity to carry out her designs. “Put Sarah Stott out of your head. You shall have your friends over, and they shall want for nothing.”

“Eh, Alice!” exclaimed her brother; while Brian looked at her in wonder and gradually dawning delight, with parted lips and dilating eyes.

“Alice—what do you mean? You can’t make her do it. You can’t make her set to, and cook things, however few—and I don’t hold with making a great display, beyond what you can justly afford. You can’t make her get out the best silver and polish it up a bit, and the glasses and things, and those old Indian dinner things, and all that; and you can’t make her clean herself up a bit, and put the things on the table and hand them round civilly—and that’s all I ask, and all that’s necessary. But you can’t make her do it,” concluded the young man, in a tone which showed that the iron had entered into his soul.

“No,” said Alice, in a voice of suppressed excitement. “I know that. No

power on earth can move an obstinate old woman as wants to vex you. I can't make her do it. But I can do it myself."

"Bi' the mass, Alice, thou art a rare un!" cried Andrew, in an ecstasy of delight, as he thumped his crutch on the floor, and looked with rapture at his strong, handsome sister.

Brian's face flushed as he looked at her. He stammered out, "I never thought of such a thing—never! You may take my word for it. And I don't see how that can be, Alice. You're my friend, not my servant."

"And what's a friend good for, if they can't do a deal better than a servant, if needs be?" she retorted. "I tell you, I'm going to do it. If Sarah Stott thinks her crabbed temper is going to succeed in making you look inhospitable—sending word to people not to come, when you've

invited them!" she cried, in great excitement—"if she thinks that, she's just mistaken, that's all. That's not our way at Thornton—to ask people to see us, and then tell 'em we find we can't do with them. How could you ever look this great singing gentleman in the face again? And, besides, I'm fain to see them. It'll be something quite new for us, won't it, Andy? Nay, nay! They shall come, and, as far as country fashion goes, they shall find nothing wanting. Trust me!"

And, indeed, she looked as if she were to be trusted. Brian jumped from his chair, and seized her hand and squeezed it.

"You are a true friend, Alice—you are so. Till you promised this, I didn't know how much I'd set my heart on having them. I'll never forget your goodness."

"Oh, there's nothing so much to remember, as I can see! Now, just listen,

and then you must be off, for I shall have plenty to do. They will come at one, you say. Well, I reckon by half-past they'll be ready for their dinner——”

“I fancy they call it lunch,” he suggested deferentially.

“They may call it what they please, so long as it's there for them. They shall have a leg of roast mutton—small—one as has hung for nearly a week, as would give a dying man an appetite. Then they shall have some partridges—I know how to cook partridges—and a plum pie, and a custard, and an egg pudding—yes, they'll get no better anywhere, though I say it. And then some apples and nuts, and some preserved ginger, and some other things that I know of—and a cake. And you have wine—very good wine. What should they want better than that, I'd like to know?”

“Nothing,” said he fervently; “and I tell you, they’ll like it just as well as if it was at the Prince of Wales’s own table. And, Alice, there’s just one thing I’d ask you as a favour, for I’m not going to pretend that I won’t let you do this for me—just one.”

“And what’s that?” she asked graciously.

“If they may have some coffee the minute they’ve done. I know they like that. I happened once to overhear——”

“Coffee and cream they shall have,” said Alice. “There’s your mother’s silver coffee service, and there’s the old thin red and white china. That’s all right. Then, before they go, some tea, with some jam, and eggs, and tea-bread. That’s quite simple. Now, you go back to your house, and, if Sarah says anything to you, just don’t answer her. Don’t for the world tell her of this. I’ll look in upon her after

I've cleared our dinner out of the way. And you'd better come and take some dinner with us to-day, Brian. Sarah shall never have it to say that there wasn't a clear field for preparing for them. And leave the rest to me."

"You are good," he repeated; and then, with an uneasy look, "But, Alice, I can't abide the idea of your setting things on the table, and handing them round. I shall just feel——"

"All that you've got any call to feel is, that when I say I'll do a thing, I mean to do it myself, and to do it well. You must leave everything to me, and it'll be all right."

"It will, Mr. Brian—it will, indeed," Andrew assured him earnestly.

"I know it will," said Brian, in a slow, solemn voice of deep conviction. "And I shall be thankful to her for ever."

“Well, now I must clear these pies out of the way. And you slip in here at half-past twelve for some dinner. My word! see how time’s flying. It’s nearly twelve now. Sarah Stott, indeed!” she concluded, seizing a cloth and wrenching open the oven door.

Brian, grateful, but still embarrassed, moved towards the door.

“Then I’ll say nothing about it to her?”

“Nothing in the world. Leave it to me,” seemed to come from the depths of the oven.

And Brian, with a nod to Andrew and a “See you again soon, lad,” went out.

Left alone, the brother and sister were silent for a little while, till Alice again said in emphatic tones, “Those old servants get beyond all bounds. I’ll Sarah Stott

her! The idea o' setting herself up in that way. Brian's far too indulgent to her."

"Well," observed Andrew, in an impartial tone, "there's no doubt but he'd have been poorly off without thee, Alice, this time. But I tell thee one thing, lass. I hope he'll keep, or be kept from going near Barracloughs' between now and to-morrow."

"I don't think he'll go near Barracloughs, if Barracloughs don't come near him," Alice decided, after a pause of consideration. "Anyhow, I'm not going to fash myself about that. My business is to make up for Sarah Stott's bad behaviour, and I mean to, I tell you, I do so!"

As she made this announcement, she raised herself from a slightly stooping position over the oven, the heat of which had perhaps given an extra brightness to

the red in her cheeks. Be that as it may, she happened to meet Andrew's eyes fixed upon her, as he listened, with great approval, and, it would seem, with something else as well, for there was a queer, humorous look in his eyes, and a shrewd smile upon his big, not ill-natured mouth; and as Alice's colour rose still higher under his scrutinizing gaze, he observed, speculatively—

“Poor Sarah Stott! She's getting to be an old woman now. I guess she couldn't have been so young, even when you were a baby, Alice. I wonder if she ever had a lover.”

“Lover!” retorted his sister, in an indescribable tone. “Thou's sat too long over thy books. What's lovers got to do with it, in the name of goodness?”

And with that, without waiting for a reply, she went out of the kitchen, and

imperatively summoned some distant invisible "Lizzy" to her aid.

Andrew smiled, and turned again to the books, over which, she said, he had sat too long.

CHAPTER III.

BRIAN'S ANTECEDENTS.

IT boots not here to relate how the pacification of Sarah Stott was accomplished in one single encounter between herself and Alice Ormerod. Suffice it to say that the said pacification was effected, and that thoroughly; that the crabbed ancient retainer, who had been Brian's mother's servant during the first years of her married life, and her mistress during the last years of that life, and who of course felt, in consequence, that she might do or not do exactly as she pleased in the son's house—this rebellious vassal was subdued from rank insubordination into a kind of

ungracious submission, and while assisting Alice to the best of her power in the preparations for the morrow, had to content herself with a continuous under-current of grumbling at the changed conditions of things since the old days, and of despairing wonderings as to what would or would not "happen next." As to Brian, with the cowardice characteristic of his sex in such emergencies, he fulfilled Alice's behest to the letter, and said nothing to Mrs. Stott. His whole mind was set on the promised visit of these strangers—he was quite conscious that probably, after it was all over, his henchwoman would make him pay somehow for having carried his point in the present, but that was a matter for future consideration and suffering. Just now, he had the comfortable conviction that his friend Alice was a host in herself, and that under her direction all would go

well. He offered to make himself useful in any way that might be thought desirable, but he took care never to be left alone with Sarah. For all her conquered state there was a rebellious glare in her eye now and then, which made him thankful for the protection of Alice's presence. That, however, would be withdrawn when she had to return to the farm in the evening, but she had provided for this contingency also, and invited him to go back with her, and sup with them.

“Why, I'm fairly living at your house!” he cried. “I think I'd better go somewhere else. I'd thought of calling in to see Jim Barraclough, and——”

“Now, *don't!*” Alice said to him, in a sweet persuasive voice, and she laid her hand, shapely, if roughened and reddened by its daily toil, upon his arm, and looked at him.

As they stood thus, it might well have occurred to an observant mind, with a turn for analogies, that the young man was a vacillating, tempted human soul, and that the young woman who looked at him with her clear, steady eyes was his good angel, drawing him back from some danger. So strong she looked, so handsome, and so winning in her panoply of maiden modesty and daring combined, that the idea, "Surely he must love her," could hardly have failed to occur to any well-regulated mind.

"Don't go there—for this one night," she said pleadingly, in quite a different tone from any she ever used to him when others were by. "Come to us, and stay with us."

"You never like me to go to Barracloughs," he said restively. "You are never yourself about them, Alice, and I can't imagine why."

“Well, we’ll say I’m not,” she replied, but with no look of intending to relinquish her purpose. “Never mind that. Barracloughs are always here, and so am I. You can see them, or we can talk about them, any time. Your friends are coming to-morrow—this gentleman that you think so much of, and two ladies. Now, Brian, don’t go to Barracloughs’. You know what I mean.”

“I do know, Alice,” he said suddenly; “and you’re right, as you generally are. I won’t go to them. I’ll go with you, because you’re good to me, and, what’s more, it makes me feel good myself to be with you.”

“Now, that’s good of *you*,” she said, with a little, almost imperceptible, shake in her voice. “But I thought you would. Bring your fiddle and give us a tune. Andy and father will be fain to listen. You know they always are.”

He nodded. "I'll get it," he said, and went off upstairs to seek it.

Alice seized the opportunity to say to Sarah Stott, in a rapid undertone—

"If any o' those Barracloughs come, Sarah, and ask for him, he's out, but you can't tell them where. Do you understand?"

On this point the old woman and the girl were one and undivided.

"Ay, I understand fast enough, and they'll none get to know from me where he is," she said; and then Brian returned with his fiddle, and he and Alice stepped across to the farm, where a glorious fire filled the great kitchen with a ruddy, dancing light, and where Andrew was waiting for them with a joyful greeting.

They all passed a sociable, happy evening, talking, listening to Brian's music, and his accounts of the fine things he heard

and saw and did when he visited the great city to the south-west, and of many other things, and at eleven o'clock he went home decently enough, never even asked if any Barracloughs had been near, and after playing to himself for a short time, went to his bed, and fell asleep, filled with great anticipations for the morrow.

“Eh, but yon's a decent lad enough, when he gets into the reet company,” said Farmer Ormerod, when Brian had gone. “It's a real pity as he has nothing to do—no bit of work as he needs must attend to. It would be th' savin' on him if he had—keep him out o' bad company, and o' the rest on't.”

The reflective silence of his son and daughter gave consent to this statement.

Brian Holgate had been left an orphan some five or six years ago. He had been the only child of his parents, who were of

that class of which a few remnants linger, scattered here and there over the land—people who had once been more considerable both as to property and position, but who had contrived to retain their old family dwelling-house, and enough property in land, farms, and sound investments to bring in an income more than enough to absolve them from the necessity of working for their bread. Brian had inherited from them the old house itself, the only home he had ever known, and property to the amount of something over three hundred a year. He and his people were strictly provincial, strictly rural, and rural Lancashire, at that, in all their ways and habits. They had never been in the habit of gadding about. His father had never been farther afield than to Irkford and Blackpool—to the first of which he had been known once or twice to repair on the

occasion of some great and solemn public festivity, while to the latter he had gone several times for the benefit of the sea air—a briny atmosphere matching in strength that which played about the bleak moors amongst which he usually lived. Mrs. Holgate had been rather more of a traveller. In her young days (so the record ran) she had spent some three months in London, drinking as deeply of the cup of amusement and dissipation as was commensurate with visiting a very proper and steady-going family of dissenting relatives. She had also, at different times, visited different parts of her native country, and had even taken a jaunt to the Lakes once with Brian, when he was a very little boy. But even that can scarcely be said in these days to constitute extensive travel.

And, so far as was known, Mr. and Mrs. Holgate both took very much after their

respective forefathers, who, though in nowise blood connections, had lived near together, always on the same spot, had done the same things, thought the same thoughts, and steadily vegetated on, in exactly similar lines, for many generations.

It may perhaps be credited that to such a couple their own son Brian came as a great, and not always agreeable surprise, with his mercurial temperament, his extraordinary love for music, his sudden furies, and equally sudden meltings back into sweetness—his picturesque beauty of face and figure, and his general instability of purpose as regarded the keeping of the conventionalities as practised in Ravenside Forest. Where had he come from, this anomalous creature? How had he ever come from *them*—that was the thing? Was he intended as a cross, or as a blessing in disguise—very much in disguise?

And how was he to be brought up? Obviously, there was but one answer to that—as his father before him had been brought up. It never occurred to them to try and find out whether treatment a little different from what had been given them might not be better suited to this so obviously different child of theirs. On the contrary, with the rigidity peculiar to that mould of mind, they saw quite clearly that the same kind of treatment, intensified, might have the desirable effect of making their black swan into a white one. Sarah Stott, who was an oracle to both of them, had also pronounced strongly in favour of this line of treatment, and accordingly, the eager, excitable lad, with his head full of dreams and fancies, and his throat full of melody, had been sent to the rough Hollowley grammar school, and kept there, amongst the rudest of the rude, the hardest,

toughest, and most unsympathetic of surroundings, until a serious illness, brought on by exposure one day when he had played truant to read poetry in the woods, had aroused his parents to the stern conviction that in thus persisting they were only—throwing their money away. A council of war was held, in a somewhat aggrieved spirit, which ended in his being allowed to go to the vicar of Thornton-in-Ravenside to read with him, daily. They all shook their heads over this innovation, and were not too well pleased when, in direct contradiction to their croaking prophecies, a distinct improvement soon became visible in the lad's spirits, health, and whole appearance. The vicar was a lonely man, and an ardent musician himself, and when he died, which happened when Brian was about seventeen, he left him his violin, which, so his will stated,

was a genuine Amati. Brian alone had any appreciation of the value of the legacy ; his parents thought a fiddle an odd kind of thing to leave to any one.

Since his nineteenth year he had been left pretty much to his own devices, which, as we have seen, led him into the vicinity of as much music as he could conveniently, or inconveniently, manage to hear. He had gradually become acquainted, through faithful and persevering attendance at the concerts, with some few members of the orchestra, and for a short time he had taken lessons from "Brown, of the second violins," of whom he had spoken to Alice, with the results already made known, and perhaps with some others, potential, if not actual ; aspirations, vague wishes and longings for a kind of life which he had hardly pictured with any distinctness to himself, but the idea of which loomed

vaguely and grandly in his heart. He had great thoughts anent the promised visit of Felix, the noted singer—thoughts which none knew of but himself, though Alice Ormerod, without knowing exactly what they were, perhaps guessed that there were thoughts there, and wondered wistfully about them.

And so dawned the Saturday morning, the day which was, he had said, to be the proudest one of his life.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT ALICE SAW.

SHORTLY before noon Brian set off into Hollowley to meet his distinguished visitors. He had a gig of his own, but that was, of course, useless on an occasion like this. There would be four of them to return, and the road to Thornton was a steep and toilsome one. Brian had ordered a large cab and a pair of horses to meet them.

The two women were left to complete the preparations, spreading of the table, and so forth.

“ You look after the things being ready

for the table, and I'll do the waiting," said Alice to Sarah. The younger woman was looking wonderfully handsome and attractive in the gown which, either with innate good taste or by some lucky accident, she had chosen to put on for the occasion—a fine gingham of a rather light, dull blue shade, made very plainly and simply; it was one of her ordinary working dresses, got at the beginning of the season, but never before worn. In its style it was as simple as the plainest housemaid's garment, so as to be useful for the purpose for which it was intended; but in quality, cut, and finish it was of superior nature. Despite its simplicity, and despite the delicate lawn apron with little frills, meant to give an air of humble domesticity to this toilet, Alice had not succeeded in looking like any one's waiting-maid, or, indeed, like anything but the beautiful and

independent young woman that she was. And the finishing touch—the cap—she had not been able to make up her mind to, but wore her own splendid hair, in its usual style, drawn back not quite tightly, and plaited in thick plaits at the back of her head.

And so prepared, she sat down with Sarah Stott in the kitchen, and awaited the arrival of Brian and his visitors.

“There they are, for certain sure!” cried Sarah excitedly, as at last, after half a dozen false alarms, a cab did really pass the window, and then clattered over the stones near the gate.

“Ay, there they are, sure enough,” Alice repeated tranquilly. And then, through the open window came the sounds of laughter in voices of a calibre they did not often hear in Thornton—a man’s voice, women’s voices, and a sort of parley, in

which Brian's voice also made itself heard, and the words, "Oh, not till seven, if you will keep us so long!" and then a silence while they came round to the front of the house, and then a fresh bustle as Brian's voice said—

"Walk in, pray, and I will call my servant."

"You stay where you are, Sarah, and never trouble yourself," said Alice, rising, and feeling just a single flutter at her heart, in spite of her composed bearing. These friends of Brian's, whom for love of him, and that he might not be put to shame before them, she was going to wait upon—what manner of persons might they be? Well, in another moment she was going to see. She heard them go into the larger parlour, a kind of drawing-room; she heard a woman's voice, in tones of rapture, "Oh, what a lovely doggie! Will

you speak to me? What is your name, you beauty?"

And then Brian called out, "Sarah!"

Alice walked straight along the passage to the parlour door, where Brian was standing, expecting his aged retainer. He had not understood how thoroughly Alice meant to do what she had undertaken. When he saw her advancing, his face flushed violently, a look, half laughter, half vexation, came into his eyes, and he paused.

"You called, Mr. Brian?" said Alice simply; and at the sound of her voice the guests looked in her direction, and, Brian standing a little inside, she saw them also.

There were three of them, as expected. A tall man, with something in his look and bearing such as she had never seen before. It struck her instantly, and impressed her, and she wondered what it was. Then two ladies; one tall and mature, though still

young, with a beautifully-formed figure, and a piquant, attractive, plain face, full of life and intelligence ; the second, tall, too, but much younger than either of her companions—a mere slip of a girl, not more than seventeen ; slight, but very graceful, and with the loveliest face, or, perhaps, the promise of the loveliest face Alice had ever dreamed of.

They stood and looked at her, all three, in silence, with arrested attention and well-disguised surprise. Brian, as usual with men in such cases, was quite beneath the occasion. Alice, however, was fully capable of dealing with it.

“ Was it to take the ladies to get of their things ? ” she asked tranquilly, as he did not speak.

“ Yes, please, ” he said hurriedly, “ if you will be so good. ”

“ Would you please come this way ? ”

she said to them, and stepped without further ado up the narrow, low stairs, and led them into the "best bedroom," where she had prepared everything for their comfort.

"What a delightful, scented, country room, Ines, isn't it?" said the elder lady to the girl, who looked smilingly, and perhaps a little dreamily around, and assented in a low, sweet voice.

"Can I help you at all?" asked Alice, feeling for the first time one moment's uneasiness in the presence of their beautiful soft frilly garments, their mantles of lace and velvet, their curious dainty gloves, and the faint indefinable perfume that seemed to be wafted from them at every moment.

"Nothing, thank you—unless it was a little hot water," said the elder one. "My face is covered with smuts, I know; and

there is a little one on the tip of even your nose, Ines, my child. Verily, one does not travel in 'the manufacturing districts' without getting traces of it."

"The hot water is there," said Alice, pointing to a jug of it; "and dinner is at half-past one; and if I could be of any help to you, would you please ring that bell?"—and she pointed to the bell-rope.

"Oh, thank you!" they both exclaimed, in what seemed to her straightforward simplicity an unnecessarily emphatic and grateful manner; "you are so kind; but we will find our way downstairs again as soon as we are ready."

But, despite this emphasis (she was not acquainted with the expression "gush"), Alice did not dislike either of these ladies. They were quite different from anything she had ever seen before, totally unlike any of the moneyed dames of Hollowley

and its vicinity ; but she quite understood that they meant well, and really did think her kind when they said so.

“Then I will leave you,” she said, with a smile, and went away, followed by another “Thank you so much! There is everything we want.”

Down into the kitchen again, to the assistance of Sarah Stott, who, now absorbed in the business of the feast, had forgotten her disapproval of the whole entertainment, and had so flung herself heart and soul into the culinary preparations as to forget even to ask what “th’ strange folk” were like.

Then there was another sound of light laughing voices, as the ladies came downstairs.

“Eh, how they do mince!” observed Sarah Stott abstractedly.

“It sounds like it, but they don’t mean

to. It's just the way they've got used to," Alice hastened to explain. "Now I reckon I can carry in this mutton, and tell them to come to dinner."

Which thing she did, with the comfortable consciousness that her colleague was now bent on her work, and that all would go well.

When they were all assembled round the table, and delightedly admiring the dish of Dijon roses and richly-tinted autumn leaves which she had placed in the middle of the table, and while she stood beside Brian while he carved, and took the plates from him, she had ample opportunity to "take stock" of the visitors, and she did so.

It was a round table, and the tall man, the "great singing gentleman," as Alice called him, had seated himself opposite to Brian. Alice took but two looks at him ;

with the first she measured his outward appearance, his stature, features, and bearing, and said to herself, "Thirty-four or five, I should say ; and eh, he is splendid-looking ! Brian was right ; he's a picture of a man."

With the second and longer look, she studied his expression, at the same moment taking notice of the sound of his voice, as he turned towards the young girl, with a half-smile, saying—

"Well, Ines, how about the Sanskrit roots now ?"

This, of course, *was* Sanskrit roots to Alice, who, however, decided within herself, "He'll do ; I'm certain he'll do. I could trust that man, for all he's such a fine gentleman. Brian was right again. He's simple and he's nice."

And at the same time, her quick eyes took note of the slight blush which covered

the cheeks of the young lady whom they both called "Ines," as she replied, with a laugh, half embarrassed, half audacious—

"Oh, you think you can vex me with my Sanskrit roots! But it is useless for you to try. I don't mind."

"Mr. Holgate's beautiful village and delightful old house, not to mention his lovely dog, ought to banish all recollections of such tough, dry things," said the lady with the plain face and dark eyes.

"I'm very glad if you like them; and I'm sure you are most welcome here," said Brian, simply. "It's only country fare and a country place that I can show you; but I often think that though it's such a toil to get into Irkford and back for any little bit of amusement, yet I would not change this old place for the finest house there."

"No, indeed, I should think not!" she

cried, with emphasis. "Change your own old home for a brand-new Irkford palace! I hope not, indeed!"

"I agree with Mr. Holgate," said Felix; "but as for you, Lisa, you would be utterly wretched away from the 'cinder heap,' as your friend Reedley calls it—utterly wretched. You put on a lot of sentiment about the country, and rocks, and mountains, and so forth; but the paradise of your heart is 100, Queen Street, and to be within a threepenny 'bus-fare of the Concert Hall."

"So it is, for a permanency," the lady owned candidly. "It's what I have been accustomed to all my life; just as Mr. Holgate has to his old country-house. We are both well suited in our surroundings, I consider."

"Mrs. Reichardt is as faithful an attendant at the concerts as yourself," said

Felix, turning to Brian. "I should be afraid to say how many years it is since she has missed one of them."

"Why afraid, pray?" she asked, half laughing.

"Because it might reveal how advancing years are telling upon you."

"Pooh! I'm not afraid of advancing years. They may come. I shall never give in to them. I think it is the greatest mistake ever to stop being young. Don't you agree with me, Mr. Holgate?"

"Well," said Brian, diffidently, and with a blush, "I haven't thought about it for myself, yet; and I should think you have no need to do so either, however many years, as Mr. Felix says, you may have been going to the concerts."

"*There!*" said she, turning a laughing and delighted face towards the artist; "there, Felix, your words are powerless

now to sting me in the slightest degree. I never had anything nicer said to me in my life—never!”

“I have heard the same kind of thing before now from you, when I’ve happened to say something that pleased your fancy,” he retorted. “I do seriously think I ought to have warned Mr. Holgate of your determined propensity for making yourself agreeable—literally—to every one, no matter what their opinions may be.”

She merely laughed.

“Do not try; it is of no use.” And Brian, looking at her, added, “I don’t suppose you can ever have seen me, because I sit in the gallery; but I have often noticed you at the concerts. Your places are in the twelfth row, and you never fail. At the last one, I saw Miss Grey with you. Of course I didn’t know who you were; but I recognized you both

the moment I saw you at the Hollowley station."

"Yes; I was there on Thursday, too," said the young girl, who, it appeared, was called Ines Grey. She spoke almost for the first time, and looked with a smile and a half-deprecating glance at Felix, who also smiled as he returned her glance, but with something in his expression which Alice's observant eyes saw, but which she could not interpret to her own satisfaction.

"Yes, indeed, you were there," he said, shaking his head. "That was Elisabeth's doing, not mine."

Ines smiled again, and nodded her head, as if to say, "It matters not whose doing it was. I was there;" while Mrs. Reichardt observed, in the tone of one who feels that she has reason and common sense on her side—

"There was no harm in it, Felix. The

child must hear some music of some kind, and it is quite natural that she should wish particularly to hear yours. I think sometimes that you are rather crotchety in that respect.”

Felix laughed aloud; while the young lady, going very red, said, in tones of something like defiance—

“M. Félix is never crotchety, Mrs. Reichardt.”

Elisabeth smiled a good-natured, tolerant kind of smile; but Felix himself looked rather surprised, and Ines, turning to Mrs. Reichardt, with a sudden change of tone, said quickly—

“Please forgive me.”

“I am not offended, dear child,” said Elisabeth, with so generous and kind an inflection in her voice, that Alice took her more than ever into her heart, and was deeply interested in observing how, after

this little episode, they all three smiled pleasant, genial smiles, as if they were accustomed to be on very good terms with one another, and were relieved when even the semblance of a cloud was quickly dispersed.

What did it all mean? Alice speculated, feeling that she had never witnessed anything half so interesting. A mangled version of "The Corsican Brothers" at the Hollowley theatre, which had constituted her only experience of play-going, was nothing, nowhere, in comparison with this real play going on under her eyes here around this table. What she felt about them, though she would hardly have known how to put it into words, was that they each and all lived their lives, and lived them to the full; that they drank the cup of experience, of whatsoever flavour it might be, which was presented to them, at

a full draught, and not in sips—to the last drop they drank it. They had a firm grasp of their lives and of what happened in them, and did not vegetate in a mere existence. Keenly she felt this, as the shape of her own daily life flashed into her mind—not with a sense of disparagement, but with one of contrast. Then, who were they? In what way were they related to one another? She would have to ask Brian afterwards, though perhaps he himself would not know. She had never felt so much interest in, or curiosity about, strangers before. And if they had in any way repelled her, she would not have felt it now; she would have let them, and all connected with them, glide from her mind once and for all, after they had disappeared from her actual sight. But they did not repel her. Though so utterly outside anything in her previous experience, she was

conscious of liking them all three heartily, and of liking each one in a different way. She felt as if she should never tire of looking at Felix, with his face so strong, frank, and handsome, and his clear eyes. Once, when hers happened to encounter them, she felt pleasantly thrilled. It was a good spirit that looked at her; she only just checked herself in time from smiling back a greeting to this spirit, in which perhaps there was something akin to her own.

She liked Mrs. Reichardt—"Elisabeth"—for somewhat similar reasons, setting apart the fact that, instead of being remarkably handsome, she was what is called plain in feature. But she had so true a smile, such shrewd, kindly eyes, so honest a ring in her voice, that she inspired confidence and liking in every way. Like many plain-featured women, she had the beauty of a tall, admirably proportioned

figure, and possessed also a fine natural taste in dress. Everything she wore, she wore well, with individual style and distinction, and made it look as if it were hers alone, and could by no possibility belong to any one else. She had superb dark hair, coiled all about her head ; and finely shaped white hands, on which were one or two very handsome rings.

Miss Grey puzzled Alice a little. She called the lady "Mrs. Reichardt," and the gentleman "Monsieur Félix," which had an odd, foreign sound about it. Yet she seemed on the most intimate terms with them, and they called her "Ines," "Child," or "Dear child," indifferently. She was beautiful, though so young, and she would become more beautiful. With all her extreme youth and even artlessness, there was a certain still, stately pride about this young girl, which Alice detected at once ;

not a disagreeable pride, but a quiet aloofness and composure, which was evidently inborn and inseparable from her. Her face was pale, her eyes grey and dark, her hair of a bronze-brown hue, and the outline of her face and figure, long, fine, and, though graceful, proud—like herself.

When the dinner, or “lunch,” as she noticed that they called it, was over, Alice said to Brian in an undertone—

“Mr. Brian, if you’ll go into the parlour, I’ll set you your coffee there directly.”

Brian rose at once. He was trying to carry out his part of the bargain, but he did not succeed in getting rid of a conscious look, which amused his friend Alice. This young woman had remarkably keen eyes. Little that took place escaped her. But, being perfectly comfortable as to her own doings, nothing that passed embarrassed her. She had been aware for some

little time that Elisabeth was observing her, though she managed very creditably to control and almost to conceal her curiosity. And now she saw that Felix also had begun to remark upon her ; and he, being a man, did not so thoroughly succeed in disguising his interest. Miss Grey alone seemed so occupied with her own thoughts as not to heed much that went on around her.

But when Brian rose from the table, they all did the same, and followed him into the parlour ; and when, after an interval of a few minutes, Alice went in, carrying the coffee on a tray, she found that they had grouped themselves in a manner which struck her with surprise, and made her wonder more than ever in what way they were connected one with the other.

Mrs. Reichardt was standing a little

forward, with her back to the window, Brian's cherished violin in her hands, and she was just drawing the bow across the strings in a long, loving note, which made Alice think, "Why, it's like when Brian plays ; it speaks for her when she touches it !"

Brian himself was standing almost directly opposite to her, looking on with the intensest eagerness and interest. No wonder, thought Alice, who knew that he loved that little fiddle as if it had been his own child, or his sweetheart.

Though the day was mild, a fire was burning briskly in the grate—a fire of wood and peat, giving forth a delicious, pungent odour. Felix had thrown himself into a deep armchair at one side of the fireplace, facing the window and Elisabeth, and Alice gave another glance at him. She had expected—she knew not why—

that he would have long hair and wear a velvet coat ; and, on the contrary, he was attired just like any other gentleman whom one might meet in the streets. At this moment he, too, was looking at Elisabeth ; while Ines Grey, having drawn a low stool up to the side of his chair, had seated herself upon it, quite close to him, and leaned forward, her chin in her hand and her great serious eyes also fixed intently upon Elisabeth. When the latter saw Alice come in with the coffee, she laid the violin down, remarking, “ Ah, when I’ve had my coffee, then I will treat myself to a tune on that lovely old fiddle.”

“ Will you pour it out, or shall I ? ” asked Alice, with a smile, as she set it down upon a small table.

“ Oh, will you be so kind, please ? ” said Elisabeth, pausing and looking at her keenly and quickly. Then, glancing with

an odd, amused expression towards the other two, she said briskly—

“Come, Ines, here’s a fine opportunity for waiting upon him! Take him his cup of coffee.”

“Do not interrupt Ines,” said Felix, with a smile. “Having been dragged away from her severer studies, she is taking a real holiday, bucolic in its absence of thought. She is like the Boston young lady who went to visit in New York, in order that she might enjoy a complete intellectual rest.”

“Now, why do they all laugh at that? What does it mean?” Alice speculated, with eager interest, as she heard the light, amused laughter which went round after Felix had made this remark. But the only answer made by Ines to the mirth at her expense (or at that of the Boston young lady) was a slow, contented smile,

as she rose from her little footstool, and going up to where Alice stood, asked her in a gentle voice—

“Will you please pour out a cup of coffee for me to take to Monsieur Félix?”

“She speaks his name differently from the others,” Alice noted, while she poured out her coffee, which Ines took from her hand, and thanking her, carried it to Felix, with undisturbed gravity and sedateness, and gave it to him.

“Thank you, Ines,” said he. “Aren’t you going to have some yourself?”

“No, thank you.”

“Against Madame Prénat’s rules?” he asked.

“Really, I wonder what kind of a dragon you think Madame Prénat is?” said the young lady, with some animation. “You have said such odd things about her in the last few days!” And with that, she again

placed herself on her little stool, and added, in a decisive voice, "I don't think this is a proper time for coffee."

Alice quite sympathized with her in this opinion. She could not imagine what they wanted with it now. But, pausing a moment, to see if they all had what they wished for, her quick eyes noted that as Ines seated herself beside Felix, with this remark, and her heavy plaits almost touched his knee, he, without moving, or looking at her, or seeming in the least degree surprised or embarrassed, lifted his eyes to Elisabeth's face and met hers fixed reflectively upon him—and upon Ines. They exchanged a look—Felix and Elisabeth—the meaning of which was a mystery to Alice, and then Elisabeth, having quickly drunk her coffee, took up the fiddle again, saying—

"So this is your Amati, Mr. Holgate?"

Worth its weight in gold ;” and she turned it round and round with loving hands, and examined it with the eye of a connoisseur. “A little gem! You have been in luck’s way. Felix, you lazy fellow, are you not coming to look at this fiddle?”

“No; but I am most willing to listen while you play it for my edification.”

“Always the same,” said she, shrugging her shoulders with a half-laugh; and Alice, having no excuse for remaining longer, reluctantly left the room, just as the first note sounded.

She had not occasion to go in again very soon. The fiddling continued for some little time, together with the sounds of laughter and talking. To Alice it sounded just the same as when Brian played it; but a musician would have known at once that whereas Brian produced a very sweet, untrained tone—a sort of “warbling native

woodnotes wild," which was spontaneous and delightful enough—Mrs. Reichardt was a profoundly cultivated musician, and a rare and accomplished artist. Every note that she played betrayed the handling of a past-mistress of the instrument. If Alice knew nothing about this, Brian did; and he sat and listened in a kind of rapture, and also with a feeling of despair. "I shall never do anything like that—never; no amount of practice could ever bring me to that," he said to himself, and wondered when she had begun; where she had studied, and under whom; and with what severity of exertion she had attained to that consummate ease and mastery of the wonderful instrument. But this he confided to Alice on a later occasion; at present, she only heard the sounds, and, in her ignorance, wondered why Brian did not take the opportunity, and give them

a sample of his own powers in the same direction.

After some time, it seemed as if they resolved to go out for a stroll, for the two ladies ran lightly upstairs, and presently returned with their things on. Just as they were going out, Alice took the opportunity of stepping forward and asking Brian at what time she should serve tea. It was not consistent with the due observance of etiquette or of hospitality in Ravenside Forest to let visitors leave without tea, whatever else they might have consumed during their stay. Mrs. Reichardt expostulated.

“Indeed, you will kill us with kindness! I am sure we do not need any tea. Our train leaves at seven, and we shall be home in time for dinner at half-past eight. At what time must we leave here, Mr. Holgate?”

“I’m very sorry to say that if you must go by the seven train, you will have to leave here by a quarter past six at the latest. It is a long way, and for two miles there are no lamps on the road.”

Despite expostulations, it was arranged that they should partake of a cup of tea about half-past five, and this agreed upon, they went out. Brian said he would show them the great view of Ravenside, which was obtained after climbing a rough uphill lane for some quarter of an hour. It was already after four when they left the house, and the crimson sun was declining, and in the air there was the sharp, crisp feel of an autumn afternoon—voices rang out distinctly, and footfalls could be heard for a long distance. Watching them as they went up the high road towards the lane, Alice remembered that from the spot to which they were going they would see

not only Ravenside, but the whole of the gorgeous flaming sunset, which was already beginning, coming naturally after the wild and stormy days and nights which had gone before.

CHAPTER V.

HOW THE DAY ENDED.

BRIAN and his guests were not out of doors very long. They presently came back, talking, laughing, and apparently in the highest good-humour. They all went into the large parlour, and Alice, passing to and fro between the kitchen and the dining-room, where she was setting the tea-things, could hear—for the drawing-room door was a little ajar—first, some isolated notes of music, now on the piano, now on the violin; and then the piano ceased, and the violin had it all to itself. It was Mrs. Reichardt who was playing, and Alice seemed almost to feel the still-

ness with which they all listened to her. The girl herself, though she could not understand how beautiful it was, nor how wonderful, still realized that it was something quite unusual. Those wild, luscious, long-drawn strains did not appeal to her as they did to those within, but she moved softly, and placed the cups and saucers very gently, so as to make no bustle or disturbance, interrupting their pleasure. The violin went on for a long time, as it seemed to Alice, unbrokenly—now up, now down; now in long-drawn, piercing strains, now in short, sobbing ones, or what Alice called jerks—so they appeared to her. Then, with one long, sweet note, it stopped, and she could hear a faint, low-voiced murmur, of thanks and satisfaction probably. She smiled to herself as she went round the table, critically examining the position of everything on it. She was

glad that music had been played. Brian had given of his very best to entertain these guests, and she knew that they could offer nothing in return so purely delightful to him as this music. "Food for the gods," he would call it. Alice smiled brightly again to herself, all alone; threw her head back, and gave a little silent laugh. She knew that expression of his, though she was not very sure what food for the gods was—something of this kind, however.

"I reckon," said Alice to herself, "that they can do with some food from the Moor Isles kitchen as well."

But the music was not all over; there was some more talking, some stray notes on the piano, some more decided chords, and then a man's voice singing—a voice at the sound of which Alice suddenly stood stock-still, and then, as if drawn irresistibly

forward, moved into the passage, and listened. She could hear the difference between this singing and Brian's singing much more plainly than between Brian's playing and the playing of Mrs. Reichardt ; and perhaps that was not surprising.

She strenuously tried to catch the words of the song, but failed—they were in a foreign tongue ; so much she understood ; and the music of them was so penetratingly, so divinely beautiful, that it made her heart ache with a delicious pain. As a matter of fact, Felix was singing, to Mrs. Reichardt's accompaniment, Rückert's beautiful words, to the still more beautiful music of Schubert, the "Greisengesang." In solemn, noble sweetness it sounded forth :—

“ Der Ernst hat mir bereifet des Hauses Dach ;
 Doch warm ist's mir geblieben im Wohngemach.
 Der Winter hat die Scheitel mir weiss gedeckt ;
 Doch fließt das Blut, das Rothe, durch's Herz-
 gemach

“Der Jugendflor der Wangen, die Rosen sind
gegangen

All gegangen einander nach.

Wo sind sie hingegangen? Ins Herz hinab.

Da blühen sie nach verlangen, wie vor so nach.

“Sind alle Freudenströme der Welt versiegt,
Noch fließt mir durch den Busen ein stiller Bach.
Sind alle Nachtigallen der Flur verstummt?
Noch ist bei mir im Stillen hier eine wach.
Sie singet, Herr des Hauses, verschleuss das Thor.
Dass nicht die Welt die Alte dring ins Gemach.
Schleuss aus den rauhen Odem der Wirklichkeit,
Und nur dem Duft der Träume gib’ Dach und Fach.”

Alice knew not why tears rushed to her eyes as she listened to the deep, pathetic notes, sweet, strong, and thrilling to her very heart. It was as if all strength had left her in the presence of something more beautiful than before she had ever even imagined. And opening her eyes as the notes were coming to an end, she saw Sarah Stott standing beside her, looking almost awestruck—not a common expression on her face.

“Eh, lass, but that’s fine!” she murmured.

“Ay,” assented Alice; “it’s finest sort of thing as we’ve ever heard, Sarah; you may take my word for that.”

“Perhaps he’ll sing again. I wish he would,” said the old woman.

And in fact, after a brief pause, the piano was struck again, the voice uplifted once more in something quite different.

“I guess Mr. Brian will like *that*,” said Alice, with great penetration.

“Si les filles d’Arles sont reines
 Quand la plaisir les rassemble aux arènes,
 Les bouviers aussi, je crois,
 Dans la lande en feu sont rois,
 Oui, là-bas, ils sont rois.
 Et s’ils veulent prendre femme,
 La plus fière au fond de l’âme
 Se soumet à leur choix.”

And in fact it would have been odd if Mr. Brian, or indeed any one with ears to hear, had not liked it exceedingly; but

Alice knew the kind of ditties, of a proud and masterful kind, which were most congenial to Brian, and oftenest on his lips, and she recognized this as one of them.

While they listened with ever-increasing delight and wonder, and as the song was drawing to an end, Alice's quick ear suddenly distinguished footsteps close behind them. She turned rapidly, and in the dim light, which was every moment growing more into darkness, she beheld two figures—those of a rather tall man, and of a small, slim, lightly-poised woman. They were coming from the kitchen, towards the two listeners to the music. Sarah Stott also turned and saw them. She uttered a curious little sound, between a snarl and a snap.

“Eh, what a fond thing o' me, to have left th' dur open!” she said unceremoniously, and openly scowling upon the

visitors, while she set her arms akimbo and glared at them; merely saying after a pause, in far from encouraging tones—

“ Well, Misther Barraclough ? ”

“ Thanks for your usual warm welcome, Sally,” replied the man—he was a young man, too, with a face which it would perhaps have been carping to call ill-favoured.

“ Is Mr. Holgate in ? ” he asked, as Mrs. Stott made no reply to him, and at the same time he cast a meaning glance at Alice Ormerod—a glance which at once made him positively, not negatively, ugly.

For Alice herself, she had become perfectly rigid, both in expression and attitude; all the happy geniality and contentment had gone from her face and manner. Her eyes and lips were cold as stones, and as hard; there was no compromise in her aspect of intense aversion to the intruders.

Before Sarah had time to answer the

question about Brian, the young woman who accompanied "Misther Barraclough" had put in her word. She was so short that she hardly reached to Alice Ormerod's shoulder, and so slender and small in every way that probably Alice, if she had put forth her physical strength with a physical purpose, could easily have picked her up and flung her to some distance away from her—upon a heap of stones, for instance, or over a precipice, or into a pond—without being any the worse for the exertion. She knew it, and many a time as she had sat with a sad heart by her kitchen fire, thinking of Lucy Barraclough, she had looked down at her own strong hands, and powerful, flexible wrists—had felt the sap of life and strength so abounding within her, and had whispered to herself with a bitter sigh—

"Ay, if that was all that's wanted!"

Some thought of the same kind troubled her now, as she fixed her eyes, grown suddenly sombre, upon the brother and sister.

“There’s no need to bar the way against us, though we may not be as good as some people,” said this little creature, smiling as she unwound a white knitted “cloud” from about her throat, though she did not take it off her head. “We aren’t going to detain him a minute. Good evening, Miss Ormerod ; I see you are neighbourly ; it’s but a step across here from the farm, is it ?”

Alice merely looked at her in silence ; she was not eloquent as to words—her strength did not lie in that direction. What she felt now, sweeping over her with a sense of fiery desolation, was that the beautiful dream of a day was about to end in black clouds, storm, and ugliness,

and that all her strength could not prevent it. She could subdue Sarah Stott, she could serve the man she loved, and be quite happy in his pleasure ; she was powerless in the presence of Lucy Barraclough.

“ Has Brian got a party, or what’s going on with all that singing ? ” asked the young man impatiently. “ For mercy’s sake don’t, let’s have such a lot of mystery about it ; we’re old friends. I suppose he can see us ? ”

Alice clutched at the last straw of a hope, and spoke.

“ He’s got visitors—yes,” she said ; “ very particular visitors they are, and he’s not done with them yet ; but I dare say he’ll be able to speak to you a minute. Wait here while I tell him.”

And she stepped into the room just as Felix was singing the last phrases of his song.

Scarcely had she moved to the door than the young man, muttering something which sounded very like "D——d humbug!" also stepped forward, saying—

"Come along, Lucy; this is all a lot of infernal nonsense!" and pushed into the room, followed by his sister.

They confronted the whole party. Felix, who had just ceased to sing, was standing near the piano, at which Mrs. Reichardt, who had been playing his accompaniment, was still seated; Brian, at the other end of the room, was leaning on the back of a chair, his face filled with the delight he had experienced in the music; and Ines Grey, in an obscure corner of the room, leaned back in her chair, shading her face with her hand.

Alice had only just entered; she hesitated before crossing the whole space of the room to Brian. With the entrance, im-

mediately behind her, of the other two, the eyes of all in the room were turned upon them. Alice, when she perceived what had happened, drew herself up into an attitude, perfectly natural and unconstrained, of superb disdain ; she paused a moment, looking from one to the other. She saw Brian start up, a crimson flush on his face ; he was not looking at her at all.

“ Jim—Lucy,” he almost stammered.

“ If we interrupt, pray say so, and we will go,” said Jim, with a painfully expansive smile, and mock politeness in his voice ; “ we wouldn’t for the world intrude ! We came in a friendly way, with a little invitation, not knowing you were engaged—did we, Lucy ? ”

“ No, indeed, or we wouldn’t have come in,” said Lucy, throwing the white cloud off her head, and glancing with quick, bird-like glances round upon the company ; she

also smiled, and her smile bore a powerful resemblance to that of her brother, though he was a big and decidedly ugly young man, and she was a very small and decidedly pretty young woman.

She stood revealed—a tiny, dark, fragile creature, exquisitely trim and neat in every line of her figure and point of her costume, which consisted of a rather bright crimson satin gown, a grand collar and cuffs of lace and embroidery, and a sparkling chain of some kind round her neck. She did not exactly lose her presence of mind, but she glanced quickly round upon the company with eager, interested glances; none of them escaped her observation—Felix and Mrs. Reichardt, Ines in her corner—she saw them all; and lastly, the smile became more marked, and she looked at Brian.

“We’ve seen nothing of you for days,”

said Jim, in an ingratiating voice. "We came to fetch you back to supper. No offence. We'll go."

"There's no need to go," said Brian, in a slightly tremulous voice, as he came forward and walked straight up to Lucy, looking at her all the time with eyes which told their tale in a language which he might read who ran; "you just come in time to see my guests before they leave. Sit you down, Lucy; we are just going to have some tea before Mr. Arkwright and the ladies go. Jim, sit down."

But there was no need to sit down. Alice had left the room; but it was not she who came to announce tea at that moment; it was Mrs. Stott, and she performed her office with a marked sourness of mien, patent to all beholders. Brian performed a hasty kind of introduction, and they all went into the other room.

Lucy, indeed, did whisper something to Jim, who shook his head, and muttered, "Not I!" in response to her words; and, despite his repeated protestation that they would go, they did nothing of the kind. Brian placed a chair at the tea-table for Lucy, who seated herself in it in silence, casting repeated looks at the visitors—openly at the ladies and their attire—more furtively at Felix, who, as they were not doomed to spend the evening in this new company, found himself highly interested and entertained with the whole affair.

Brian made one or two rather incoherent attempts to explain to Lucy the nature of the day's entertainment. She listened to him almost in silence, saying "Yes" and "No" now and then. Her brother, thinking perhaps that a little amiable chat might improve the occasion, turned to Ines Grey, who sat next to him, and, with the family

smile illuminating his features also, made some observation, to which, after a pause, she replied coldly and discouragingly. But the Barraclough brother, at any rate, did not appear to suffer from nervousness. Brian was sensible of Jim's far from polished behaviour, and he suffered, and yet was delighted, and showed his delight every time his eyes rested upon Lucy. Mrs. Reichardt, perceiving his embarrassment, came to the rescue by rising after they had drunk each a cup of tea, and saying that they must on no account be late for their train, and she thought they had better now go and get ready. The kindly manner and the pleasant voice in which she spoke to the young fellow became absolute icy vacancy as, in moving, her eyes swept the face of Lucy Barraclough.

Brian jumped up, ran to the door and opened it, and called to Sarah to bring a

candle for them. His behest was answered by Alice, with a little shaded lamp in her hand. She led the way upstairs; Brian avoided looking at her, and returned to the dining-room. How different were her feelings now from those with which, in the morning, she had attended these ladies upstairs! She was about to retire and leave them; but Elisabeth, turning to her, said—

“Do please forgive me; I want to tell you that we have had such a delightful day! We never remember to have enjoyed ourselves more. It has been so peaceful and bright and pleasant. And when we were out with Mr. Holgate, we learnt how much we were indebted to you for our great pleasure and——”

“He promised me he'd say nothing about it,” said Alice, her face, which, since the arrival of the Barraclough contingent,

had looked pale and tired, now suddenly flushing crimson. But she did not withdraw her hand from that of Mrs. Reichardt, which had clasped it.

“And he did not; he did not say one word till we asked him. And we had no business to do so, you think,” she added, smiling into the girl’s proud, embarrassed face. “You must forgive us. I’m afraid we are just a little bit off-hand in our ways sometimes, and you know we could not help looking at you—as soon as ever we saw you. You should not be so—well, what you are, if you don’t want people to notice you. And I’m afraid we asked Mr. Holgate about you, and he became quite enthusiastic, and said what a friend of his you were. And we thought it so *nice* of you.”

“Oh, it’s nothing—nothing!” said Alice, her face turning pale again, as some painful

emotion crossed her mind. And just then she raised her troubled eyes and met those of Elisabeth. The glance seemed suddenly to loosen her tongue, and she said—

“You’re welcome as welcome can be ; and I was downright glad to do it. It was just like a fairy tale—you and the young lady, and that gentleman’s beautiful singing, such as *I* never heard the like of before. But it’s all spoilt now,” she added, with passionate bitterness and disappointment. “All the good’s gone, and all the pleasure. And they will be the ruin of him in the end—those two downstairs. And it’s cruel—oh, it’s cruel and hard !”

“That man and that girl ?” Elisabeth asked, in a low voice. “I didn’t much like their looks, I must confess.”

“Like them ! Eh, ma’am, there’s not one good thing about them, and he’s fair mad after them ! I did think they’d have

let him alone, when they knew he had company as they hadn't been asked to."

"But they did not know——"

"Didn't they? They perhaps said they didn't. They're not so particular as all that about telling the truth, aren't Barracloughs. But there," she added suddenly, "I've no call to be troubling you with such things! We mun all carry our own burdens. I'm rightdown glad if any of his friends have enjoyed themselves at his house; and when you've gone, I shall go home. There's nothing to keep me now."

Elisabeth looked at her with kindly, sympathetic eyes. "Do you ever come to Irkford?" she asked.

"Very seldom—once a year, maybe. We get the most of what we want in Hollowley."

"But you do come sometimes. This is my card, with my address on it. Will you

promise that, whenever you do come, you will come and see me? I should look upon it as a favour—a very great favour. I shall never forget you. Will you come?”

“I’m sure you mean it,” said Alice, looking at her. “Ay, I’ll come. Even if I was in misery, I’ll come.”

“Even in misery! Yes, I should appreciate that. I should know you believed in me. Remember, I fully expect a visit from you soon.”

“I don’t know about soon. But I’ll come. I will do that.”

“Thank you. Good-night. Don’t wait for us to go, if you want to go home. Please shake hands with me.”

Alice put her hand within that of Elisabeth, and tears rushed to her eyes.

“Eh,” said she, “I do like you. I could never have thought I could like any one so much, first time o’ seein’ them. Good

night. I think I'll just slip across now. There's nothing more that I can do—nothing."

She followed them downstairs, and went into the kitchen. No one noticed her.

"Good night, Sarah Stott," said she, in a muffled voice. "We can do no more. We mun leave them to it. I'll come in to-morrow morning and help you to side away th' glass and silver."

She cast a shawl about her and stepped out into the darkness, with bowed head and stooping shoulders—this proud Alice.

Within half an hour of her departure, Felix and the two ladies had driven off to the Hollowley station, and Brian Holgate had left his own house, and was walking in company with his two latest visitors up the lane towards the ugly, staring red-brick house, built out of the profits of a railway-grease manufactory, which house had been

christened by its owners, "Jessamine Lawn," but which was known to the entire neighbourhood as "Barracrough's"—neither more nor less.

Jim Barracrough, continuing in the darkness to smile his somewhat portentous smile, maintained a judicious silence. He left the palaver, as he called it, to Lucy, who knew better than he did how to conduct that part of the business.

"We shall soon be afraid to come near you," she said, with a laugh, "if you are going about with such grand folk as those people that we're not good enough to be invited to meet!"

"You know that wasn't the reason, Lucy," he said, humbly and apologetically. "I couldn't help it. You know I should have liked to have you there all the time. But it was quite a sudden thing, my asking him. He's a great man—I never hoped

he would come at all. He sees more people than he can remember, and he's sometimes thankful for a bit of quietness. So, when he asked me to let them come quite alone, of course I said I wished him to come in the way that would please him best. It isn't pride in him, whatever you may think. He's quite beyond all that sort of nonsense."

"Oh, all very well! But he brought those two women along with him, and never troubled to know if you had a lady to entertain them," said Lucy, in whose mind the occurrence seemed to rankle.

"Nay; he knew I was a bachelor, like himself."

"A bachelor! And pray what were the ladies, then—relations?"

"The elder one, Mrs. Reichardt——"

"She had as ugly a face as ever I saw," said pretty Lucy, spitefully; "with that

great bulging forehead and turned-up nose!"

He replied gravely, "It's a pity if you could only see that her features were not handsome, and nothing else. She is a great friend of his—his oldest friend. She lives at Irkford, with her father-in-law, an old Mr. Reichardt. He's a German, but she is an Englishwoman. She's a widow; her husband died after they had been married only a few years. She's a lady every inch, Lucy, say what you like, and fiddles like an angel from heaven."

Lucy laughed; she had not much interest in either fiddling or angels.

"And the girl?" she asked.

"Miss Grey, Miss Ines Grey, is her name. She is a ward of his, and goes to school; but she's with them on a holiday just now."

"Humph! Well, I thought them very

set-up, conceited people. And if he didn't want any one to meet him, what was Alice Ormerod doing there?"

Slowly and reluctantly he answered, "Alice was very kind. She had been helping us. Sarah Stott is getting old now; she loses her temper, and finds things troublesome. But Alice——"

"Alice doesn't. No, I dare say!" remarked Miss Barraclough, with the same light laugh which she had uttered once or twice before. "Here we are!" she added, as they turned in at a brand-new iron gateway, and began to make their way up a new gravel drive, towards a house which showed itself dimly as standing on an eminence. "You shall have a social evening with us, and forget all about your singing people and their grand ladies. I can't see what you want with them, when you have your own old friends close at hand."

At this juncture Jim walked on ahead, saying that he would open the door for them. Brian at once slackened his pace, and came to a pause, taking Lucy's hand, and saying persuasively—

“You aren't cross with me, Lucy? You know very well I'd rather have half an hour of your company than a whole day of any one else's.”

“So you show it by neglecting us, and asking a whole lot of strangers, and having Alice Ormerod in and out, making eyes at you, and——”

“Lucy, it's a lie!” said he, violently, as he almost tossed her hand away from him. “You know it's a lie. Why do you say that of Alice Ormerod? How dare you, when you know it's false!”

“Oh, dear, dear! If that's the state of affairs, you'd better go back. I see I am nowhere now. Go back to her, sir—go!”

“You know that your little finger is dearer to me than her whole body,” he said savagely; “but you’ve no call to tell lies about her. You can be so cruel; I think sometimes that you are a devil leading me to destruction!”

She burst out laughing; and if there was a nervous ring in her merriment, he was far too much excited to notice it.

“Well, I never wanted to be taken for a ninny; but a devil—there’s a good deal of difference between the two! I thought I was your friend, and that’s neither one nor the other.”

“You’re the only woman in the world for me,” he whispered hoarsely and indistinctly. “Lucy, I haven’t seen you for three days. Just one kiss!”

“No,” said she, in a clear, cold voice, as she drew a little to one side. “Not one, till you’ve earned it.”

“Well, and how am I to do that?” he asked, trying to curb his impatience under a tone of resignation.

“Don’t make yourself disagreeable to-night, upsetting the whole party. They are going to play cards, and you must join in pleasantly.”

“I don’t care for cards,” he said reluctantly. “It’s you I want to see, not the cards.”

“Well,” said she, indifferently, “all I can say is, Jim and Richard Law care for nothing else; and if you can’t give way to them, they won’t ask you to come. And I can’t, you know, of course.”

“Well,” said he, “anything to please you, or be near you. I’ll play, though I don’t see the sense of it. And the kiss——”

“We can talk about that when you’ve shown that you meant what you say.”

“You’re a precious long time in walking up the drive,” jeered Jim, as they ascended the steps and went into the vestibule.

“Mind your own business, Jim,” his sister ordered him ; “and, Brian, come in.”

Brian followed them into a lighted hall. The frank, contented expression had disappeared from his face, and had given way to one of uneasiness and indecision. It was quite clear that he was not a free agent. His eyes followed Lucy about with sombre persistency, with the looks of a lover, but not of a happy lover. Though it was not publicly known, he had been in a sort of way betrothed to her for nearly a year. But there had never been any sense of security or certainty about it, and he had deteriorated in more ways than one since the conditional engagement had been made. Lucy had made the conditions ; they were—that her father was

not to know anything about it, nor any outsiders; and that if he complied with these stipulations, she would marry him—some time.

CHAPTER VI.

BACK INTO THE TOWN.

FELIX and his two ladies were not at all too early for their train. They had not waited two minutes on the dreary and grimy platform of the Hollowley station before it came. Then they found themselves with a first-class compartment to themselves, a lamp dimly burning in it, and outside, what had been twilight before, transformed into darkness.

“Well,” said Mrs. Reichardt, leaning her head back and drawing her hand across her eyes, “I don’t think I ever spent quite such a day before. In some ways it has been unique.”

“But not disappointing, I hope?” said Felix, solicitously.

“Not in any one way. No; I have been interested, amused, and thoroughly well entertained from beginning to end. And I have been touched too. I have caught sudden and unexpected glimpses into little tracts and islands, as it were, of pathos and romance; I have indeed.”

“You always do, you know, wherever you go,” said he, with cheerful scepticism and a smile which helped to make it comprehensible why, apart from his gift of song, he was so great a favourite with his public. “It is a failing of yours. You can no more help finding pathos and romance in everybody you see, than some other people can help finding out the flaws and blemishes. It’s all subjective, you know—most of it, at any rate.”

“Ah, yes, you always talk in that way!

But I know that what I say is true. Ines"—she turned to the girl who sat beside her, and laid her hand upon hers—"did you hear what passed between me and that beautiful Alice Ormerod in the bedroom upstairs, or were you pondering over your 'roots' so that you lost it all?"

"Oh, I heard—and saw," said Ines Grey, smiling. "Yes, Monsieur Félix," she added, turning to him, "it is quite true. It was very pathetic and romantic, and very sad, too, I think."

"Don't tell me what was pathetic and romantic," cried he; "I will tell you! I will reveal to you what I saw, and then we can see whether it agrees with what you saw. In the first place, I thought, after observing them for some time, that that beautiful and most modest and well-behaved young woman was disposed to

feel not altogether unkindly towards our host, and——”

“He *thought*, after observing them for some time!” ejaculated she. “Oh, men! what extraordinary creatures they are! I saw *that* within ten minutes of our having sat down to lunch——”

“Now, Lisa, that’s a little too much! You may consider my words wrapped up in any amount of polite and roundabout phrases, but—I don’t believe it; I don’t believe you saw anything of the kind.”

“How you spoil yourself, and what injustice you do yourself, Felix, by persistently wearing this mask of cold, unfeeling cynicism!” she cried warmly, at which both her companions laughed heartily; and then he, with sudden seriousness, added—

“You are mistaken as to *my* cynicism. I think your idea is more of that nature—

your idea that a girl as proud as that girl evidently is, would under any circumstances allow such feelings to become evident in ten minutes. I'm sure she did not. Anything more dignified, modest, and irreproachably——”

“Pshaw! of course I didn't suppose *you* saw it, or Mr. Holgate either, for that matter. But I did, and I'm sure Ines did; now, didn't you, Ines?”

“Not in ten minutes,” said Ines, her fair face crimsoning. “I—wasn't thinking about it.”

Felix looked half vexed, and half amused; an expression which the young girl was quick enough to observe, but which escaped Mrs. Reichardt, absorbed as she was in reflections upon her discoveries in the regions of romance as found at Moor Isles.

“I'm perfectly certain it is so. And

those creatures who came in afterwards, that man and that girl—what odious people!”

“A very pretty girl,” said Felix, exasperatingly.

“A little vulgar chit, with such a bad expression! Ines, you must have seen what a bad expression she had.”

“I did not like her; she looked insincere,” said Ines.

Elisabeth nodded triumphantly at Felix, who merely shook his head, and observed gravely—

“Whether sincere or insincere, she looked to me very fragile; so slight and delicate, as if she could not stand much. And whatever may be the case with the other girl, it is at that little Lucy’s feet that our friend Brian lies. She can do what she pleases with him.”

“I wouldn’t go so far as that,” said

Elisabeth, whose wishes were often father to her thought. She wished well to Alice Ormerod, to whom she had taken an extraordinary liking, and she had not seen any of the day's events so clearly as Felix had. "That he was very much attracted by her, I do not deny, but——"

"I do go so far as that," said Felix; "and I hold to it and repeat it! There's a drama going on in that quiet little hamlet, of which we have just had a glimpse, and which has excited and interested even us, strangers as we are." He spoke with gravity and apparent sincerity; but kept a watchful eye, with something like a smile in it, upon Elisabeth's face the while. "Even we have been excited and interested," he went on reflectively, as he leaned forward, with his elbow on his knee, and pulled his moustache thoughtfully. "What must it be to

them, living each so near to the other, in that quiet little rustic place, with no outside things to distract their attention—able to give almost as much time as they please to studying their own and each other's hearts ? ”

“ In that quaint old house, so homely and pleasant,” Elisabeth eagerly joined in, in a kind of chorus, “ with all those wild, grand moors on every side, and that great hill—Ravenside—what did they call it ? That sunset—was it not wild and grand ? ”

“ And the farm close by, with the friend of his childhood,” pursued Felix, the smile, which she was now much too enthusiastic to notice, becoming more marked, “ doing all she can for his good, and the other little—— ”

“ You may say it,” said Mrs. Reichardt, as he paused ; “ it's just what I think myself.”

“Yes, and the other little—witch, we will say—it’s a witches’ country, you know, and I suppose some Mother Demdike or Mother Chattox has allowed her mantle to descend, altered to suit modern views, upon Miss Barraclough’s shoulders!—this little witch skipping in and out, and every time poor Alice thinks she has got a little hold of him, tripping up and touching him with her little finger, or lifting her hand, whereupon he instantly comes tumbling down from any little pinnacle of common sense to which he may have clambered, and it is all to begin over again—each time more difficult to manage than the last.”

Elisabeth shook her head in gloomy, earnest assent to this picture, and sighed deeply.

“Yes, yes; I fear you have seen only too truly! I wonder how it will all end? But,” she added sharply, and suddenly

looking up at him, "I thought these little islands and oases of pathos and romance were a nonsensical dream of mine!"

"I never said they were not. But I have, I think, skilfully filled in an imaginary outline to please you. I like to please you. One wishes to gratify one's friends, even at the——"

"Expense of truth, I do believe he was going to say. Well, all I can say is, mark my words. We shall hear more of these people. I shall make it in my way to hear more of them. I am profoundly interested in them, and in everything relating to them. I do not mean to lose sight of them, or——"

"Till the next nine days' wonder appears," said he, laughing and leaning back; "till the next claim on your interest and benevolence starts up, in the shape of the most beautiful, talented, and un-

fortunate girl that ever lived ; or a misunderstood youth who——.”

“Felix,” she exclaimed, turning upon him with a flush of real vexation upon her face, and even stamping her foot a little, “when you persist in that sneering, horrid tone, I could almost hate you, sometimes ! It is unworthy of you, and you do not in the least understand how deeply my feelings are engaged in this matter.”

As he still continued to look at her with the same good-natured, tolerant smile, she suddenly changed her tone to one of defiance, and proceeded with animation—

“People who live in glass houses should not throw stones. *You* are the last person in the world to take that tone. Who, I should like to know, is more quixotic than——”

“Spare me !” he besought her, extending his hands with a look of genuine alarm.

“Oh, spare me, and remember your promise!”

“You exasperate me till I forget all my promises,” she began, when Ines, who had been watching Felix closely during the whole of the conversation, leaned close to Elisabeth’s ear, and half whispered—

“He is putting it on more than ever—I saw him do it. It’s too bad of him! He thinks you won’t notice.”

“Wise little girl!” exclaimed the elder lady, her vexed expression suddenly disappearing, while sunshine beamed over her face once more. “There, Felix, shake hands. You are an incorrigible cynic; you were born so; you have lived so. You will never be anything else. I shall have to endure you as best I can.”

He took the extended hand, bent over it, and kissed it, with a smile.

“Amen!” he remarked. “Your in-

stinctive knowledge of character is nothing less than profound."

Ines, still leaning against Elisabeth, looked from one to the other of them, and laughed a gentle little laugh. The dispute, if dispute it had been, was over, but for the rest of the time during which they were journeying to Irkford, they still talked with lively interest of Brian Holgate and of his old home; of the little grey moorland village of Thornton-in-Ravenside; of the rough, stony lane up which they had wandered, between banks of heather and gorse, bracken and harebells, to look at the sunset, crimson, wild, and glorious, and at the huge dark form of Ravenside Moor, looking like some couchant monster, black against the golden sky. They talked of beautiful Alice Ormerod, and of her innocence, simplicity, and helpfulness. It was all something which, on the outside, at

any rate, was, as it were, out of their beat. They had looked into another kind of life, and seen feelings, common, of course, to all humanity, expressed in a different way, almost in another language, from those they knew. That was why they were interested. And the impression made upon Elisabeth's mind by what she had heard and seen was by no means so fleeting as Felix would jestingly have made it appear.

When at last the train rolled into the great lighted city station, and they had to get out, Elisabeth heaved a deep sigh.

“Back again into our civilisation!” said she. “To-morrow evening, Felix, will be as great a contrast to this as it is possible for one thing to be to another. With the people still, but what a different people!”

“You know all about it, I suppose,” said he. “I don't. I trust myself blindly in your hands. I hope you are not going

to let me in for something quite too extraordinary.”

“ I’m going to let you in for doing a real kindness to those who sorely need it,” she said reproachfully. Then, kindling, even as they threaded their way through the bustling crowd, towards the outside, where her carriage was to be waiting for them—
“ Ah, yes! If you knew what I know; if you knew the joy that one such action on our parts, so easy and so simple for us, can be to those hundreds of toilworn men and women——”

“ Regardless, as usual, of time and place,” said Felix, drawing her hand through his arm. “ Allow me to offer you my support during your harangue. I’ve often thought, Lisa, that you could, if you only had the opportunities, emulate one of our greatest and most copious orators, and do it well; and I know nothing about the toilworn

men and women, but I do know that that extraordinary little enthusiast, Reedley, has struck a perfect mine of the same sort of thing in you; and I hope you won't carry it too far, that's all."

"You never understand. Wait till to-morrow comes, and you have seen for yourself," said she; and he laughed, and said, "Well, I will;" while Ines Grey, walking close behind them, shook her head, and smiled to herself.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

INES WRITES.

IT is many years now since we spent that autumn day at the old stone house amongst the north-east Lancashire hills, and on looking back, it seems to me as though that day had been the first in a certain chain of circumstances in our lives—I mean in the lives of Elisabeth, Felix Arkwright, and myself, Ines Grey; as if it had been the forerunner of the new set of thoughts and feelings which began soon after to distinguish my life, at any rate, from what it had been before. Elisabeth has been writing about it, and she asked me the other day if I objected to contribute my

share to the story. No, I did not—I do not. Her request it was which sent me to my writing-table, and to unlock a drawer in it which for years has been closed, and the contents thereof undisturbed. I drew forth from it sundry volumes of MSS.—the journals I kept many, many years ago, while still a girl, and in many respects a very childish girl.

I am not going to quote from them—no. They are too crude, too raw and small, those old journals containing the outpourings of a girl's heart, to be presentable in the pages of a connected, grown-up narrative. They would be simply ridiculous, and far from interesting, too.

No, their poor little fancies I will not drag out to the light of day. But yet, as I turned them over, and came upon passage after passage, all referring to one subject or to things akin to it; exaggerated in

language if not in feeling, but always, as I found, steeped through and through with one great feeling—one passion, as I now see it was, of blended love and gratitude ; when I read these extracts, and saw the heart they half concealed and half revealed, I knew that amidst all its errors, hasty, ill-considered impulses, mistakes, impertinences, that heart was really ever, to use the common old expression, “in the right place.” As I saw this more and more clearly, while turning over these old leaves, inscribed with the unformed caligraphy of sixteen and seventeen, I covered my face with my hands, and wept with joy and pride and thankfulness. After all these years I see it plainly spread before me—the whole case ; all the murmurings, the sorrowings, and repinings over my own incapacity ; my wild, ardent wishes that I could do more, be more—have something

tangible to show ; all my aspirations after fame and glory—not for my own sake—how futile they were, how needless, and how amply was the want of power to become this something great and glorious atoned for, covered, and made right and successful in the midst of its unsuccess, by this one great love, unwavering, unerring, unshakeable. How it grew and developed, I can see ; always the same feeling, in different and succeeding stages—from the outspoken admiration and confidence of the child, rejoicing in a strong, kind protector, through the shy, embarrassed enthusiasm of the school-girl, deeper than before, but afraid of obtruding itself by speaking ; dim intimations of the existence, as yet vaguely in the background, of another kind of love, terrifying even in its unrealized strength, up to the ever-deepening consciousness of the maiden—love

stronger than death ; making a giant of a weak girl ; but hidden as deeply as possible even from herself—well, it was hardly to indulge in a rhapsody on my own feelings that Elisabeth asked me to do my share in the piecing together of her story.

So, having studied these old journals for the record of events, and having unexpectedly extracted from them, running alongside of this record, the faithful chronicle of my own heart and mind, I will here proceed to set down the facts, together with some of the feelings which sprang from them ; and when I have done that I will burn my old journals. They have done their duty—let them go !

And, in order to make my story clear, I shall have to go back, and as briefly as possible relate how it happened that Ines Grey ever came to be what she was, at seventeen years of age—a happy, if rather

dreamy girl, leading a life fuller and richer than she knew, even though she might be well aware of the extent of some portion of her riches ; surrounded by all good and beautiful influences ; by love and gentleness—and not a neglected waif, fighting a bitter battle with a world that was too strong for her, as it had been for her mother before her.

When my father, a brilliant and fashionable young *attaché* at a foreign court, with nothing in the world but his official salary and an allowance from his father (he was a younger son), met my mother, who was the English governess in a rich and well-known noble family much about the court, he was twenty-five and she was twenty-two. To fall in love, go through a brief courtship, and get themselves married, was the delightfully simple and rapid work of six weeks. To encounter, afterwards, the

fury of his family, who had had very different views for him—their indignant reproaches, and the punishment they meted out to him, which took the form of stopping his allowance and practically disowning him—utter and complete refusal to countenance or receive him and his impecunious and insignificant bride under any circumstances whatsoever—to stand face to face, in fact, with the complete wreck of material prosperity and hope for the future—this was accomplished in a not much longer time than that which had led to it. That is, three months after his first meeting Ines Marston, my father had made her Ines Grey; had gained a true and loving wife, and lost every prospect of worldly success. For a short time after her marriage, my mother continued her duties as governess in the family where she had met my father. They were attached to

her, and wishful for her to remain with them. Then came the inevitable break; the prospect of motherhood; the temporarily broken health, the cessation of employment; no feeling of anger on her part, but one of acquiescence in the fact that the education of the little Grafs and Gräfinns must go on without interruption, whatever might become of Mrs. Raymond Grey—and then a long series of clouds and misfortunes, varying in darkness, but never really disappearing. The most terrible and crushing of all came at last, the death of my father, of typhoid, in Paris, when I, her baby, was less than a year old. Then began her fearful battle with the world; with poverty, failure, and adverse circumstances of all kinds. She had a brave heart and a proud spirit, if an unforgiving one in some respects. While to her it was the crown and glory of her life; the thing

for which she had been born, to have been my father's wife and the mother of his child, she never ceased to resent, with undying strength, the treatment of herself and her husband by his family. Not even for her child's sake would she in any way introduce herself to their notice. She calculated her prospects—success doubtful; poverty and wretchedness almost certain—her child her own; no favours asked, and none refused or grudgingly granted. She resolved to face Paris, cruel, hard, and utterly indifferent, like every other great city, to such as she was, and there try to make her livelihood. She was an accomplished musician in a light and graceful style (a gift which she did not in any way transmit to her child). She had still two or three moderately influential friends, and with infinite difficulty, and by the constant practice of a heartrending and body-wast-

ing economy, she contrived, with her child, to exist, to keep alive—it was hardly more.

She gave lessons in singing and piano-playing, and occasionally she received a commission to sing either at some evening or afternoon at a private house, or to take some small, secondary part in a public concert or oratorio. It was on one of these occasions, when I was seven years old, and my mother was twenty-nine, that, at the last moment, she was sent for to sing a little solo part coming in between the choruses in a new romantic composition which had just leapt into popularity. Being by a German composer, it had of course been heard everywhere else before it penetrated to Paris; but music-lovers had begun to clamour for it, and at last it was to be produced. The chief “star” of the occasion was a young English baritone, one Felix Arkwright by name, then

between twenty-four and twenty-five years of age, who had been making a furore for eighteen months or more, in London and the English provinces, and who was now singing most gloriously in French to a French and English audience, cool and critical in the extreme. The idea of singing even her small part before them, and in the presence of Félix, as he was called there, somewhat unnerved my mother. The life which she had now for six years been leading, of incessant struggle, and constant pressure of her whole slender personality against the door, to keep the wolf out, had not had the most bracing effect upon her nerve, her courage, or her health in general. Instead of being inspired by the promotion so suddenly extended to her, she was flurried by it. Instead of arraying herself promptly in her one smart evening costume, coming to the

front, and looking as if all were well with her, and she without a care or a trouble, which, as every sensible person knows, is the way of ways in which to get on in the world, she felt and looked shrinking and timid, pitifully wanting in manner and *aplomb*. As is well known, feelings like these, if once indulged in, are apt to gain upon their victims; and it seems a pity that when women are overtaken by poverty and misfortune, and are forced to encounter the strength of the world arrayed against them, they cannot at the same time have their nerves and sensibilities turned into tempered steel. Science as yet has shown us no way to such a consummation—it certainly had not arrived in my mother's case. She did not that evening distinguish herself by any very brilliant success. In fact, she sang out of tune more than once, occasioning a slight hissing from some of

the audience, which hissing had not the effect of reassuring her. She was nervously and intensely conscious of it all; but that which troubled and unnerved her more than all the rest put together was the keen, direct glance of the young Englishman in all the pride of his youth, his popularity, and his success. After each slip that she made she was terribly aware of his eyes fixed piercingly and (of course) angrily upon her.

Becoming more and more confused, and with ever a stronger sense upon her of a benumbing kind of headache, and of on-coming illness, she at last lost her presence of mind at a critical point, and in an agony of nervousness took up the words of her solo at a wrong place entirely. There was quite a loud storm of hissing, there was a wretched discord as the instruments, triumphantly going on their way, did not quite succeed in drowning her ill-timed

contribution to the concert. She saw the angry scowl of the conductor, and heard his muttered "*Madame, que faites vous, donc!*" It was all very terrible and overpowering, and at this juncture "Madame Ines," as she was called in the bills and programmes, took the opportunity of fainting away. A certain amount of bustle and commotion was inevitable; for about five minutes the concert was stopped; but very quickly the unconscious form of Madame Ines was borne away to a dressing-room, and there left with an attendant, a candle, and a glass of cold water. A charming little *blondine*, with blue eyes and a mouth of iron, was beckoned forth from amongst the first soprani, and with the greatest success undertook the part in which Madame Ines had failed. (This was the beginning of a very brilliant career for the young lady, who charmed every one by

her presence of mind, and by the adequate style in which, at less than a minute's notice, she filled up the gap caused by the other woman's stupidity.) So the first part of the concert came to an end, and orchestra, chorus, and soloists dispersed to their different haunts, for a quarter of an hour's pause.

A number of the admirers of M. Félix were waiting for him, with congratulations, and praises, and many other agreeable, if transient results of a brilliant success. He smiled upon them all, as he had the habit of doing; was courteous and kind, but persisted, with the dogged perseverance said to be so strongly developed in his nation, in inquiring, until he got some sort of an answer—

“Where is the lady who fainted?—the English lady—they told me she was English—Madame, what is her name? Ines?”

Yes, Madame Ines. She looked ill. Where is she?"

"Oh, she's all right," said the *prima donna* of the evening. "She will be looked after. Most likely she has gone home. Stupid of her to make such a fuss, and what a mercy that little Lucile should have proved herself so useful and capable!"

"Yes—quite so, but——"

"Come, Monsieur," added the lady, who was not accustomed to be thwarted, "I wish to present you to a friend of mine."

"Presently, Madame," he answered her, with a gracious smile and bow, as he turned his back upon her, still inquiring right and left for Madame Ines.

"What interest can he possibly have in that dowdy, stupid frump of a woman?" the *prima donna* asked angrily, her face red with vexation at his want of gallantry.

But he had at last found Madame Ines

in an obscure little dark room, in which the candle was still burning dimly. She had recovered consciousness, and the attendant had left her and gone to seek more amusing company. She sat limply in a frowsy-looking armchair, and she looked sick and sad and spiritless. She had not gone home. She did not look as if she were capable of getting home without some assistance.

“Madame,” he began, pausing on the threshold of the little den—for it was nothing more. She looked up languidly, and slowly recognized him. Then tears rushed to her eyes, and over her face spread a slow, painful blush.

“Oh, Monsieur!” she began, half rising, “I cannot express my shame and mortification at having sung falsely and put you out. I have no excuse. I was not well enough to undertake the part, and I knew

it. I—I—it is so seldom such a chance comes in my way—and I have my little girl to think of. I felt as if I could struggle through with it, but——”

“I was very sorry to see how ill you were,” said Felix. “The interruption was nothing. I felt sure you were even more indisposed than appeared, and I have come to see if you are not going home.”

“Presently, Monsieur, since you are good enough to ask—when I feel a little more rested, and able to walk as far as the omnibus.”

“You must not dream of walking anywhere,” said he, quickly.

“Oh yes!” She tried to laugh. “On the contrary, I must not dream of driving. Pray do not let me detain you. I shall presently set out. I feel better already from the kind way in which you have received my stupid blunders.”

“You have your wraps here,” he said, looking round. “Yes, I see—a shawl, a hood; permit me. Now”—when, with his help, she had put them on—“take my arm. This way!”

He led her round to a side entrance which he knew of, sent a prowling *gamin* skipping in search of a cab, which soon appeared; put her into it, with gentle, but quite unquestioning decision, got her address, and said a few words to the driver; then spoke to her through the window.

“He will drive you straight home. And—pardon my freedom, but these Paris drivers are such rascals, sometimes—I have taken the precaution to pay him the exact fare. May I call and inquire after you to-morrow morning—about noon? Thanks, and *au revoir*.”

In another second he had disappeared; and she, lost in thankfulness and astonish-

ment, gave herself up to the long unknown luxury of getting home so easily, and to reflections of gratitude which for the time being were stronger than her sensations of physical illness.

Such was the manner in which my mother made her first acquaintance with Felix. Mine began on the following day.

I remember exceedingly well how she was too ill to go out to any of her engagements that morning, and had to send notes to the pupils who were expecting her. Also, how she said to me, caressing me, that perhaps a gentleman might call—she didn't think he would ; it was most unlikely that he should remember ; still, one ought to be prepared. And with that she roused herself to fight against the ever-increasing sensations of illness, which were rapidly becoming too strong for her, and dressed me in my poor little best frock, and herself

put on that gown which was usually reserved for rather superior occasions. Having accomplished this, it seemed as if she could do no more, but sank down in her easy-chair, and, when I placed myself at her feet, laid her hot hand on my head, and became strangely still, with her eyes closed, so that I was frightened, and became still more so when I heard her say now and then, half to herself, as if she did not know she was speaking aloud, "He won't come. He will forget. Of course he will forget, and I am so ill."

But just before the little timepiece struck the hour of noon, some one did knock upon our door.

"Run, darling, and open the door!" said my mother quickly to me; and I obeyed, turned the handle with both my small hands, and confronted, with much amazement, a visitor of an utterly unknown

kind in my experience—a tall and handsome young gentleman, with bright, kind eyes, and a pleasant smile which gradually spread over his face when, after looking far above my head for the person who had opened the door to him, his gaze travelled gradually down till it encountered the top of my head, just above his own knees, though I was involuntarily standing on tip-toe, the better to see what he was like.

“May I come in, little lady?” he asked, laughing, as I made way for him; and he stepped forward, saw my mother, looked at me again, and apparently took in the whole situation. I found that he was holding me by the hand, closing the door, and then advancing towards my mother’s side.

“Good-morning, Madame. I hope you have recovered from your faintness of last night, and feel better to-day.”

She tried to smile, to rise, and to speak, and succeeded in getting out something about "Your kindness—such trouble—not much better, I fear. But I will take a few days' rest, and then——"

"And then——" seemed to leave volumes unsaid. I saw the smile on the stranger's face give way to an expression of much gravity, but the kindness and goodwill never clouded over for one moment.

"I fear you are very far from well," he said seriously. "This, I suppose, is your little daughter? I see her likeness to you."

"Yes," said she, brightening up for a moment. "This is Ines, my only child. But I always think she has such a look of her father"—proudly. "Ines, this gentleman is called Monsieur Félix. Shake hands with him, my darling, and say, 'Good day, Monsieur.'"

I obediently did so. I felt at once the most unbounded confidence in M. Félix. He, probably to gain my mother's confidence the more quickly, took me in his arm, as he seated himself nearly opposite to her, and, leaning forward a little, held me encircled, and occasionally stroked my head with his hand while he talked.

“Monsieur Félix, professionally, here in Paris,” he said, explaining. “My name, my own private name, is Felix Arkwright—which might be anybody's name, might it not, Mrs. Grey?”

She smiled a little. He was strong, kind, and determined. She was weak, lonely, and feeling every moment more sick, ill, and stupefied. For the first time, in all the years of struggle, a great terror had come over her, a feeling of helpless, naked impotence, such as sometimes is the forerunner of an attack of severe illness.

It took him but a short time to make her tell him all her circumstances and history : her scanty supply of friends—they had been mostly of a migratory kind, and had dropped off, one by one ; how, on her own side, she did not possess a single relation, and how the relations of her husband had behaved at the time of his marriage. To all of which he listened with a grave, respectful interest, seeming in no hurry to move or get the interview over, until she, suddenly recollecting herself, made some feeble kind of an apology for thus troubling him with her private anxieties—having no claim, and so on.

“You and I are of the same nation, Mrs. Grey,” he said. “It seems to me the most natural thing in the world that you should tell your own countryman these things. I can see several reasons why we should have confidence in one another—

first, as I say, because we are both English. Then, you tell me your father was a clergyman. Well, mine is not exactly a clergyman"—he smiled—"but he is a very learned man, and, until I was able to help him, he was very poor too. He is a great scholar, and he holds the post of librarian to Lord Urmston, near Kirkfence, in Yorkshire. I'm very proud of my father, though I have bewildered him a good deal by persisting in becoming what he can't help thinking is a bit of a vagabond; instead of entering the Church, and receiving the living of Urmston"—he smiled again. "So there are two points in which our circumstances are very similar. And we have both the same art—we serve at one shrine, don't we?"

"Oh, pray don't laugh at me!" she exclaimed, doubtless thinking of the fiasco she had made the previous night.

“I am not laughing, indeed. I am perfectly serious,” he replied, and went on ingeniously finding other reasons why they should experience a fellow-feeling on many points. When he went away, it was with the avowed intention of sending a doctor at once, and with the promise speedily to call again, and hear that she was better. That was what he said. My mother, one of the proudest and most independent of women, submitted like a child to these measures. She was too ill to resist, in fact, and her one idea was that by some means or other she must get well enough to begin to work again.

It is needless to go into details of the events which swiftly followed the advent in our lives of this new friend. The mistakes, the languor, and the fainting fit of the evening ; the headache, the oppression, and the feeling of stupefaction of the fol-

lowing morning, were the beginning of my mother's last illness. When next Felix Arkwright called she was delirious, and did not know him, and ere long she succumbed to the same fever which six years earlier had carried off her husband. Her illness was short and sharp; there was never any doubt from the first as to how it would end. Her strength, both physical and nervous, had been too much and too long undermined by her life of privation, solitude, and anxiety, for her to be able to resist the ravages of the fever. Its fiery breath extinguished her, literally, and that very quickly.

To me, when I think of it, that period is always heavy in the background of my memory, like a terrible dream, or a great black cloud, sweeping resistlessly up and over all familiar things; darkening the whole landscape of life. Little did I know

of it all, save of one terrible hour when I saw a dying woman holding the hand of that strong and gracious protector whose suddenly begun friendship had never wavered for an instant. She, as I say, was holding his hand ; I—for some reason not explained to me till afterwards, when I learnt that she, feeling the end near, had asked for me—was held by his other arm on the bedside. She was trying with all her failing strength to explain something to him about her child and its father's relations—how Ines was not to go to them ; they would hate her and be unkind to her,—anything rather than that—a convent, a charity school. Better the coldness of the world on which one has no claims, than the hatred of kindred by whom one is not wanted. The world, she seemed trying to explain, will, in the last resort, find you a grave in one of its rivers or

attics—the kindred will grudgingly compel you to live in woe and torment. Unless Ines could go to them with a welcome, she must never go at all.

Dazed, frightened, and not comprehending, I heard all this, and heard the voice in reply—

“Have no fear for Ines, Mrs. Grey. Your child shall not suffer any of those things you fear for her. I promise you this. I’ll swear it, if you like.”

“No, no!” said she, with a last effort at a bitter kind of pleasantry, “you are a stranger; it is relatives who hate people. Your word is as good as your bond. You have proved it. Do not think it is more than the body that dies,” she added. “I shall see and know it all. Ines——”

She stretched out her arms to me; but, before she could touch me, fell back. I began to cry. Felix rose quickly, spoke

to the nurse, and carried me in his arms into the other room. Nurse and doctor went to the bedside. The door between was closed. Felix sat down in the parlour, placed me on his knee, and caressed me gently, while we both sat very still and watched for, I knew not what.

I was not too young to know something of what death meant. I understood one thing very well—that I should never see my beautiful mamma any more. That was after the nurse had come in and said a few words in a low tone to Felix, and he had then, gathering me to him, said, after a pause—

“My little Ines, your dear mamma is dead.”

Who shall depict a child's terror and grief—its anxious little heart and wild forebodings—its awful sense that the one who was always there is gone, and that it

has nowhere to go? Not I, for one. Time has mercifully dimmed and erased the acute feelings of that time. I have only a general recollection of desolation, of the nurse's pitying looks, the landlady's apprehensive regards, the doctor's quick inquiry and shrug of the shoulders. I remember, too, the smile of Felix, as he said, in answer to all these doubtful expressions, "I undertake for the little one. She will come with me."

He was as good as his word. This young man, with his open countenance and pliable and gracious manners, had a fund of dogged resolution and determination in his character which one would hardly have expected to find in a genuine artist-temperament. Perhaps his was not quite that kind of temperament, but of that anon. He was not to be cajoled, ridiculed, or argued out of his purpose.

Openly and in the light of day he declared his intentions. Convents and charity schools seemed to have no charms for his mind. As a matter of duty he communicated with my father's people, who wrote and grudgingly offered to defray my expenses at a cheap school, where I could be brought up with a view to eventually earning my livelihood as a governess.

“Governess, from seven years old!” I remember hearing him say, as he tossed a letter which he had been reading on to a table, and looked at me, not gently and smilingly, as usual, but with a red colour in his face, and an angry frown. “D——d cold-hearted churls!” he observed aloud; and then, in a lower voice, as he still continued to gaze at me—“Lisa will know. Yes, that will be all right. Come here, little one; I'm not cross with you. Will you come home with me, eh?”

“Oh yes,” I said promptly, and he laughed.

“Too funny, to go to Paris ‘in maiden meditation fancy free,’ and return a family man! But Lisa will understand—yes, Heaven be praised, she will understand. Then you shall go with me, my little girl. We’ll see if there isn’t something better in store for you than an inexpensive boarding-school where you could soon begin to make yourself useful, and then teach the young idea till you are seventy or so. Bah!”

He rang the bell, gave me into the charge of a young woman who was temporarily acting as my *bonne*, and with a more contented expression on his face went out, on his business or his pleasure, with both of which he was abundantly provided.

CHAPTER II.

I GO FOR A HOLIDAY.

WHEN M. Félix, as I called him, because every one else did so, returned to England, after a triumphantly successful visit to Paris, I and my nurse formed a part of the impedimenta which accompanied him. He must have written, I suppose, to Mrs. Reichardt, telling her of his arrangements. At any rate, his first engagement, after his return, was to sing at a concert in the great northern town. It was one of the places which he most frequently visited, and where he was most popular. When he sang at Irkford he always stayed with the Reichardts.

Elisabeth and he had known each other all their lives. Their ages were almost identical, and in their childhood her father and his father had been next-door neighbours and fast friends. Mr. Crompton, Elisabeth's father, had been a surgeon in extensive practice; Mr. Arkwright had been, by way of attempting to be a business man, in the stock and sharebroking line, but with his heart in literature and the classics. At last his business had come to an end. By the interest of some friends he had received the post of which Felix had spoken to my mother, and had gone, with his boy, to the country. But the brother-and-sister friendship between Felix and Lisa had never been broken off, even when he went to London, and then to Italy, to see what he could do with his voice, and she, at nineteen, married Max Reichardt, the only son of a wealthy

German merchant at Irkford. At the time I speak of, when he brought me with him from Paris, Elisabeth had been married five years. She was childless, and though devoted to her husband, her energies were great, and she had many outside interests to fill up her time. The house was a resort of artists and musicians—of all such who were to be found in that dingy manufacturing town. At twenty-four Elisabeth was the same woman that she was at thirty-four—genial, gifted, enthusiastic; her passion for music only rivalled by her passion for humanity. Her husband, who adored her, delighted in furthering all her schemes for the improvement of mankind in general, and of the lower-class women and child-kind of Irkford in particular. Elisabeth was very loyal to her sex; not in any loud or obtrusive way, but deep down in her heart, in all her principles, in

every action in which the question of womankind arose at all, she was their unflinching champion.

Even at that time, and young as she was, she had a vast correspondence on all kinds of social and philanthropic subjects, and was hand in glove with the workers of that day, who *at* that day were almost universally considered maniacs, amiable, doubtless, in intention, but often mischievous in action. Her good works, done for pure love, not for either glory or praise; her music, which was also a passion, and a real one, with her; her great heart; her quick and receptive if not always perfectly judicious mind—these were things as inseparable from the personality of Elisabeth Reichardt as motion is inseparable from the sea, or majesty from the mountains, or beauty from trees and flowers. They were her beauty; they

and the spirit which animated her and them gave loveliness of the highest kind to her homely-featured face, and made her what she was.

Felix told me about her before we arrived there, describing a very good and very kind lady who would be very glad to see me.

“Will she love me?” I asked. My mother had so often told me, with showering kisses, “I love thee, my darling, I love thee!”—and my heart had ached after both the words and the kisses. Lisette was very kind, but she would not crumple my new black frock by too demonstrative an embrace.

“She will love you, little one—yes!” he assured me quickly; and put his arm round me, as if suddenly realizing that perhaps I needed something of the kind.

He had not deceived me. It will easily

be understood that what Mr. Reichardt good-naturedly called Felix's freak, commended itself seriously and with delight to his wife. With the greatest pleasure she gave herself up to the question, What is to become of the child? and involved Felix in endless consultations as to the best course to be pursued. It ended in his going away to London to fulfil an engagement, and leaving me to pay a long visit to his friend. But he often reappeared on the scenes, and I, meantime, led a very happy life—happy, in spite of the fact that I did not cease to miss my sweet mother. Nor did these people try to make me forget her. Though Felix never spoke of her to me, Elisabeth did; she talked to me of her, took me on her knee, and asked me questions about her, told me I must do this and that because my mother would have wished it; told me, too, beautiful

things about mothers in heaven watching over their little children on earth, and loving them for being good. And Felix, who was sometimes present during these discourses, sat by and said nothing, but never contradicted her.

I need not relate in detail what became of me, little waif and stray that I practically was. I know that I passed a happy childhood and young girlhood; partly with Elisabeth, and a great deal of it in the quaint old house in a wood on the outskirts of the great Yorkshire town of Kirkfence, where Felix Arkwright's father lived; and I believe it was a real joy to the old man to busy himself with the education of Felix's adopted child. At any rate, he did busy himself with it, and perhaps no child was ever better educated, in the real sense of the word—better trained to use the intelligence she had been born with—than

was I, by this old-fashioned gentleman, with the somewhat timid manner, and deep, innate goodness and purity of heart.

Felix always said that though his father was utterly devoid of knowledge of the world; though he had failed pitiably to accumulate money amongst the other money-makers; though he was devoid of any ambition beyond the possession of certain (to him) priceless books, and free access to all the treasures of Lord Urms-ton's library, yet that to know him was a liberal education. And I am sure it was. Chiefly with him I studied history, Latin and Greek, and the classics—the severest classics of English literature; and ran about the woods, and galloped over the moors, and tore my frocks, and tanned my face and my hands, and learnt to despise the telling of lies and the pretending to be or to know what I was not or did not

know. There, too, also I learnt a somewhat old-fashioned code of silence and humility before my elders and my betters ; the latter being included in the former always—learnt implicit obedience to my kind instructor, and was perfectly happy till, when I was fourteen years old, I was removed from Lanehead, and placed in London, under the charge of one Madame Prénat, a friend of both Elisabeth and Felix.

Elisabeth meanwhile had become a widow, and her father-in-law, old Mr. Reichardt, had come to live with her. All her happy life was darkened for many months, clouded for years, by this loss, but with time the impulses of a naturally sane and healthy nature reasserted themselves. Much of the glory and the dream had departed, but Elisabeth did good, and fiddled in the after-days as in the former ones, and continued to be the fast friend,

and the most trusted one, of Felix Arkwright, her old companion, who, after working hard for some years in obscurity and silence, literally awoke one morning and found himself famous, and from that hour stood in the very front rank of his profession.

But this is wandering somewhat from the point. To Madame Prénat's charge I was consigned, and well she did her duty by me. She was the English widow of a French professor of languages, who had held a high post in a well-known London college; and she added to her income and pleased her own love of giving instruction by taking a certain number of young girls under her charge, on the distinct understanding that she was to educate and form them on the principles which she considered good. I will not here enter into a description of those principles, and of

what they practically led to. Suffice it to say that with many parents they would not have been popular, since a good deal more attention was given by Madame to inner realities than to outside polish, though she had her views on the latter point, too.

Elisabeth was very enthusiastic for her. Felix was perhaps not enthusiastic—perhaps he did not understand or care enough about it all to investigate the subject very deeply. But he believed in Elisabeth—in her heart and her head; and if she believed in Madame Prénat—good! Such probably would have been his verdict on the matter.

Three years passed, during which I studied hard and with eager avidity, under Madame Prénat's auspices. She it was who discovered my one small talent, in the direction of philology, and especially in that of the ancient and Oriental languages; and she it was who fostered this talent, and

caused me to discard the pursuit of many other things, usually considered component parts of a "young lady's" education.

I was happy with Madame Prénat. I was happier still in the holidays, with Elisabeth, whose goodness to me never failed or changed; but I was in Paradise on the occasions, few and far between, always to be remembered, on which Elisabeth, Felix, and myself were all staying together at his father's house—once for a whole week this pleasure lasted. Who shall describe the high happiness, the unbroken harmony of those golden days? Not I—I felt it in every fibre of my being. I could not, either then or now, analyse it, and I have no wish to do so; but, looking back upon those days, it seems to me that in them met together several things which are perhaps not often found so combined—friendship, relationship, pro-

tectorship, all good in themselves, and in this case unflawed by any alloy of jealousy, distrust, or littleness of any kind. Says the poet of comradeship and democracy—

“The wonder is always and always how there can be a mean man or an infidel.”

And for those who should lead the life that was mine in those days, the wonder might well be perennial.

The one cross in my lot, if cross it could be called, was that M. Félix, as I had the habit of calling him still, never would, if he could help himself, allow me to go and hear him sing in public. I wondered why, then. I know now. I learned it by degrees. I knew the privilege to be mine which most people would have given a great deal to possess; I could hear him sing specially for me, or for his own immediate circle, almost as often as I pleased. And I valued this

privilege highly; but that which I so delighted in—to see him the hero of the wildest applause and enthusiasm at great concerts or festivals, he generally succeeded in preventing, nor would he ever give any reasons for this prohibition—to me, at any rate.

“ Ah, M. Félix, may I not go and hear you sing to-night ? ”

“ No, Ines. I’ll sing for you at home, if you like. Never mind the concert.”

“ But why—but—— ”

“ Because, my sweet child, I don’t choose it,” was all I ever got by way of a reason; and though it was always said with a smile and a kindly look, I knew perfectly well that it was final. I might, and did comment upon it frequently, and probably very impertinently. The impertinence never disturbed Felix, though it might sometimes amuse him; nor did the com-

ments, except on one or two very rare occasions, chiefly through Elisabeth's interference, ever gain me the privilege I longed for. Through her agency I once or twice knew him to break this rule, and let her take me to some concert or oratorio at which he might be singing. I only dimly knew that he sang in opera also; at that time I had not, to tell the truth, a very clear idea what opera was—I never heard Felix in one; and it was only afterwards that I found he was not particularly devoted to that branch of his profession. I discovered it by accident once, overhearing some one say he had heard him singing in a certain opera, and what a pity it was, that, with his voice, he should be, as an actor, a mere stick. Speechless with indignation, I looked up at Elisabeth, who was with me, and who had also overheard this candid expression of opinion. She

laughed immoderately, and took an early opportunity of relating the incident to him, I being present. He laughed too, and shrugged his shoulders. Then, seeing my face, red with anger, he laughed again, and observed that I seemed to regard it as a personal insult.

“They might not think it perfect, but they had no need to say—a *stick!*” I burst forth.

At which Felix and Elisabeth both laughed again; and he, speaking more gently, told me—

“When people have things to do that they particularly hate, my child, they may succeed in getting through them by force of will; but—especially in the regions of the fine arts—they are not likely to be as graceful or agreeable in their performances as those who do the same things *con amore*. Your unknown friends were quite right in

their remarks, whatever your sage head may think on the subject."

I was silenced, but far from convinced. I pondered the subject, and wondered why, if he hated this thing, he did it. It must be, I decided, because the music was so glorious, and he loved it so, that in it he forgot what he called the mummery pertaining to it all; perhaps there was a grain of truth in this assumption. I was very young, very ignorant and high-flown in my ideas, and it never for a moment occurred to me that my hero undertook this distasteful part of his career in order to secure the large sums of money which he could so easily gain by it; no, I only wished he would let me see him in his capacity of "stick;" but that wish was never gratified.

Thus, happily, easily, gladly, my life progressed, till now in this October, just

after I had passed my seventeenth birthday, and when I had been reminding myself, with a feeling of wonder, that it was nearly three months since I had seen either Elisabeth or M. Félix, I one morning got a note from him, dated from a London hotel :—

“ DEAR INES,

“ If Madame Prénat will allow it, and if you can be ready for the 3.30 N.W. train to Irkford, this afternoon—do not deceive yourself into thinking I mean to-morrow—I mean to-day as ever is,—if this can be managed, and you will have your things on, and your traps packed up ready for some two weeks’ absence from town, I will call for you in a cab about three o’clock. If Madame will spare me three minutes of her precious time, I will explain to her the reason of this short

notice. We go to Mrs. Reichardt's, and I have wired to her that you are coming with me.

“Yours ever,

“FELIX ARKWRIGHT.”

“Oh, Madame Prénat!” cried I, rushing to her, with this document in my hand; “you will not object, will you? A whole fortnight! What can be going to happen? And to Mrs. Reichardt's! Oh, is it not too, too blissful?”

Madame took the note, read it, and smiled her slow, expanding smile, then looked at me over her spectacles without speaking. I was quivering with impatience and excitement.

“It is a serious break in the middle of term,” she observed. “It is like a man—a poor, ignorant, single man, to forget all such things, and think October as good a time as August for a holiday.”

“Ah, Madame ; but if he wishes it——”

“True, if he wishes it,” she repeated ;
“and if you also wish it. Suppose it were something very disagreeable to you that your guardian wished——”

“I should do it, of course,” I replied stoutly, but feeling the suspense terrible. I was silly enough to think that she might oppose the scheme, and that Felix might submit to her opposition. “He must have some reason for it,” I went on urgently ; “he knows all about the terms and things—he does, really.”

The smile became grimmer. “The poor dear man ! He thinks he does, I dare say ; he tells you so, but we must not accept every word from him *au pied de la lettre*. He has many things in his head,” she nodded.

“He must have a reason,” I reiterated stupidly.

“Assuredly,” she admitted. “The reason appears to me quite obvious—in fact, not to be mistaken.”

“Why, what do you mean?” I asked, at a loss.

“Ah, you will not study the newspapers as I bid you,” she said, laughing; “consequently you must suffer from ignorance, and, as it is nearly twelve, and Mr. Arkwright is to be here at three, the sooner you go and prepare for your departure, the better.”

I forgot the awe which tempered my warm affection for Madame Prénat. I threw my arms round her neck, gave her one hug and one kiss, and flew upstairs to my room. I had no time, in the agonies of deciding what to take and what to leave, to go into the question, “What can the reason be which appears so obvious to Madame Prénat? The newspapers—

what of the newspapers? Well, I had no leisure to think about it. My object was to be ready at three o'clock, when Felix should call for me.

And naturally, at three o'clock, I was quite ready; inwardly in a state of the greatest agitation; outwardly calm and well-behaved, as I sat in Madame's private sitting-room, in her presence, and waited for the expected ring. The ring, when it came, was inaudible in that room. Just as I was beginning to have sickening qualms as to the possible advent of a telegram from Felix, to say he was prevented from coming, the waiting-maid threw open the door, and announced him. I sprang up, and started towards him, as usual. What was it that arose between us, in one brief instant, between the time of my rising from my chair, and the meeting of our hands? What paralyzed my

tongue, and utterly quenched my usual voluble joy on such occasions? I did not know; but felt a strange constraint. I left my hand in his, and looked up at him silently. He, however, was not afflicted with any such sudden dumbness.

“Ready, quite ready, I see,” he said, with a laugh, and stooped, and touched my forehead lightly with his lips—as he had always done.

“You look well, child,” he said; and then, leaving me to one side, passed rapidly on, to greet Madame Prénat, and I realized that I ought in any case to have waited till he had done so. “I hope this is not against all your rules and regulations, Madame Prénat,” he said, smiling, and trying to look as if he considered it a serious matter. “At any rate, I see you have consented, whatever you may think of the irregularity. Mrs. Reichardt wrote

and told me it was all wrong ; but, you see, one can't alter the time of the Festival, even for such an important person as this," and he looked at me.

"That is understood. I was sure it was the Festival," said she, with dignity and affability combined.

"Festival!" I echoed—"what festival?"

"Doesn't she know?" said Felix, opening his eyes, and laughing again. "How very amusing! Evidently, Ines, you do not take that interest in my proceedings which might reasonably be expected from you."

"But what festival? I'm very stupid; but what festival is it?" I demanded again. An idea had arisen in my mind as to the meaning of all this—an idea so laden with promise of delight and enjoyment that the contemplation of it quite overpowered me.

“I told her she ought to study the newspapers,” said Madame. And then, in a kindly tone—“The musical Festival at Kirkfence, child; the great triennial Festival. Surely you must have seen the announcements, for weeks past, and that Mr. Arkwright is to sing there.”

“The Kirkfence Festival! And—are we—I thought you said we were going to Mrs. Reichardt’s?”

“So we are—to-day,” he said. “I have to sing at Irkford to-morrow. On Friday I have to sing at a town near there; and on Monday we all go together to my father’s, and stay over the Festival.”

“And am I—going—too?” I asked, in solemn, awe-struck tones.

“You—are—going—too,” he said, with a low bow, and an imitation of my dramatic tones. “Unless you very much object,” he added, more briskly.

I sat down again, and clasped my hands, and looked at them. They were both smiling—generous, delightful smiles of goodwill and kindness.

“She does not seem altogether to take to the idea,” said Felix.

“It is too much—too much happiness!” I said gravely. “But I shall get accustomed to it. I am ready, M. Félix.”

“Yes, it is high time we were going,” he assented. “You will pardon the abruptness of the summons, Madame? I would really have called, if I could, to explain.”

She waved her hand graciously. “You have been very considerate, hitherto, in not interrupting her studies,” she said indulgently, and with the manner of one who, while judging from a very lofty standard, is still anxious to give credit where credit is due. “I am not sorry for Ines to have the

break. It will do her no harm, nor will the change to the bracing air of the North be bad for her."

He had been gradually retreating towards the door, and now again said we had only just time to catch the train; shook hands with Madame Prénat, and went towards the stairs.

I bestowed one more embrace upon Madame, who kissed me with unwonted demonstration of affection, and hastily whispered in my ear—

"All pleasure to you, dear child, but don't let your excitement get the better of you so. You look quite pale now. After all, a musical festival is—a musical festival—and nothing else."

"And nothing else—that's just it," I replied, as I rushed downstairs and to the door, where I found the cab waiting, and Felix standing by, looking impatient.

“Euston Square—as quick as you can go!” he told the man; and I felt that I had fairly begun my unexpected holiday.

CHAPTER III.

WITH LISA.

THAT was indeed a most delightful journey —that four hours and a half in the train from London to Irkford. To my great relief, the strange paralyzing sensation which I had felt on first meeting M. Félix did not return. Why I should have had even a momentary feeling that he was in some way changed, I could not tell. It was ridiculous and unaccountable, I soon told myself. Here he was, exactly the same as ever, in the best of spirits, as I soon became myself, so that we laughed a great deal at all kinds of small and trivial incidents on the way, or at the most feeble

kind of jokes or remarks of our own or of one another's. The newspapers and picture papers which he had bountifully provided remained unread. If he had feared that we should need them to while away the time, through lack of matter about which to converse, he had evidently been mistaken. We talked without ceasing—or rather I did, principally—during the entire journey. My spirits had risen immensely. My confidence in him was quite restored—or perhaps I should say my confidence in myself,—the conviction that it was all right—that he was not bored with me or my schoolgirl platitudes and experiences, but appeared, on the contrary, to be deeply interested in what I had to tell him about my career at Madame Prénat's. In fact, he put a good many shrewd questions to me—questions which, if I had not been really filled with a single-hearted enthu-

siasm for my studies, I might have found somewhat embarrassing.

“After all,” said I, at last, winding up a prolonged account of my doings, “I enjoy the Sanskrit and Professor Willoughby’s lessons the most.”

He looked at me with a curious expression.

“It seems an odd taste,” he observed.

“Why, do you object to it?” I asked, suddenly sitting up again, and looking at him with some apprehension.

“Object! Not in the least, if you enjoy it.”

“Oh, I do. And Mr. Arkwright—your father, you know,” I added, with some embarrassment—“I began Greek with him—I did a good deal of Greek with him. I liked it better than anything else that we did. And he said I had some aptitude—some ‘scholarly capacity,’ that

was what he called it. So, as I liked these languages so much, and Madame Prénat examined me in all I had learnt, to see——”

“Oh, it’s quite right, Ines,” he assured me kindly. “I know Madame Prénat is like that; that she has a wonderful gift for finding out people’s best mental capacities—so Mrs. Reichardt says, and I believe her. And of course it is good for the best faculties of the mind to be trained. Go on with it all, as hard as you like. We shall be having you a learned young college *donna*, if there can be such a thing. It is a little beyond me, that’s all. Things of that kind always were.”

“Monsieur Félix! Beyond you!” I repeated, in solemn incredulity and indignation.

He nodded.

“Yes, exactly—beyond me. So my

poor father discovered, and shook his head sorrowfully over it. I remember his telling me, when at last he had made up his mind to it, and found that I had a voice to sing with, but no powers for Greek and mathematics—no senior wrangler capacities—that God had given and God took away. If it had pleased Him to endow me with only a lower gift, it was not for us to complain, but to make the most of what had been bestowed. And he was right.”

Felix looked straight at me as he gave me this information, and I could not in the least discover whether he was speaking seriously or sarcastically. I held my peace and wished I had not said anything about my own supposed “capacity” for philology in general, and the Oriental tongues in particular.

“I know it was the greatest comfort to

him, to try his hand on your education," he went on. "He found a congenial soil in which to plant the seeds of his own great learning—because, you know, he is very learned. I don't suppose you will find it all holiday at Lanehead. He will want to see how you have been going on, and to hear what you are going to do."

"I will tell him everything he wants to know. I wish I could ever do him credit," said I, from my inmost heart. But I did not feel quite so buoyant as before. That little remark of Felix's, to the effect that these, my favourite studies, were a "little beyond him," oppressed and afflicted me to a certain extent. There was a little silence, during which I reflected deeply on this and kindred topics, and then summoned up courage to ask—

"You say you don't mind my going on with these things. But suppose I worked

very hard at them, and got really to understand something about them—would you then call me a blue-stocking, and think me a horrid prig ? ”

At first he looked amused, apparently on the verge of laughing. Then, seeing my intensely earnest expression and anxious suspense, his look changed.

“ My dear child,” said he, kindly, “ calling you a blue-stocking could do you no harm. And prigs are like poets, born, not made. No Sanskrit and no Greek could make you into a prig, and no ignorance of those things could prevent you from being one if you had the makings of one in you. But you are not a prig—you won’t be a prig, ever. We will not think about it.”

“ I am glad you say so,” said I, and there was another pause. His observations had given me comfort as regarded

the prig and blue-stocking question. There was, however, another matter about which I was anxious to be enlightened.

“You are, then, going to sing at Kirk-fence?” I asked.

“I am, Mademoiselle.”

“Every day?”

“Every day; generally twice a day.”

“And is Mrs. Reichardt going to all the concerts? But of course she is.”

“Yes, of course. Can you imagine her staying away from one, unless she were too ill to move?”

He smiled blandly at me—would not help me out—perhaps did not understand that I wanted helping out.

“You will never let me go anywhere where you are singing,” I said, feeling a little afraid of coming to the point. “So I suppose I shall stay at Lanehead with Mr. Arkwright.”

“ I fully expect that Mr. Arkwright will himself indulge in the dissipation of several concerts—especially those at which I may distinguish myself. But of course you can stay at Lanehead if you like.”

“ You know what I mean,” I exclaimed almost sharply. “ Are you going to let me go to any of the concerts, or not ? ”

My dignity was offended. I wished to look majestic; I do not know what I looked, but I felt as if I should burst into tears very soon. Felix, on the contrary, appeared greatly amused.

“ Why *do* you offer one a premium to tease you as much as possible ? ” he asked, laughing. “ But I will explain, honour bright. A great musical festival is not the same thing as either an ordinary concert or an opera. I wanted to give you a holiday, and some pleasure, if I could. I consulted Lisa, and she solemnly assured

me that nothing would so effectually secure both for you, as taking you to the Festival, since you have a curious wish to hear me sing—in public. So I thought that this time you should, if you like and wish it, go to all the concerts.”

I sat and gazed at him.

“To all—*all* the concerts? After I’ve so often teased you to let me go, when you said no . . . oh, you *are* good!” I said, quite brokenly, and turned aside and looked out of the window. What a happy girl I was! Then I furtively drew out my handkerchief to wipe away a tear of joy, and was somewhat relieved to find that he was standing up, and, with his back towards me, was taking our small packages from the netting; for we were now travelling swiftly through the smoke of Irkford, though it was too dark to see anything save masses of great buildings,

and lines of twinkling street-lamps far below.

“There!” he observed, as he laid the things down on the seat, and could not avoid catching my eye. “What a little goose she is!” he said gently. And then—“Your gratitude is extravagant, my child. You must not make so much of it.”

I made no reply. I had my own views on the subject. There was no more conversation. The train glided swiftly into one of the great Irkford stations, and then half an hour’s drive brought us, just after eight o’clock, to Elisabeth’s pleasant old house, situated in one of the nearer suburbs of the town.

That night I dreamed wildly of Sanskrit and Greek, Budha and music, and awoke in the morning with the conviction that I was a thoroughly lucky and enviable girl.

And this conviction only grew stronger as the delightful days flew by. We had gone to Irkford on a Wednesday. On the Thursday there was the "Faust" concert, at which I was present, in spite of some objections urged by M. Félix. Elisabeth combated them by an application of the adage, "In for a penny, in for a pound," and I maintained a discreet silence, only too glad to have the chance of going, and not wishing to spoil it by any ill-timed interference on my own part.

On the Friday he sang again at a concert in a neighbouring town. Elisabeth and I were left to our own devices, and I had the bliss of hearing full particulars of the plans for our enjoyment at Kirkfence during the Festival week. So perfect and delightful did these arrangements appear to me, that I could only draw deep sighs of profound satisfaction as one detail

after another of them was unfolded to me.

I was sitting on a stool at Elisabeth's feet, with my hands clasped round my knees, and I remarked after a silence—

“ I don't think there is any one living in the world now, happier than I am. To have a fortnight's holiday,—to go to the Festival at Kirkfence—the musical Festival,—to hear such things as Monsieur Félix told me were going to be performed there, and—— ”

“ But, Ines,” she interposed, quietly but suddenly, “ I don't quite understand. You don't care for music to that extent ? ”

“ I love music,” said I. “ It's like nothing else, to me. But you mean I cannot express myself in it. No—that is true. I cannot, and it often makes me sad when I realize it.”

“ I did not mean that,” she pursued,

in the same quiet, conversational tone. "What I mean is, that there are other things you take more delight in, as things. You say you love music. But can you imagine yourself attacking the difficulties of music, and grappling with them, resolved to overcome them for sheer love of the thing, as you do the difficulties in your philological studies—your Sanskrit and Arabic roots, your Parsi grammars, and all the rest of them? Because, of course, Madame Prénat keeps us acquainted with your progress, and she speaks very highly of your capacity for languages. You love these difficulties—they are pleasant to you, as my violin difficulties were to me when I was practising six hours a day, or more."

"No," said I, "you are quite right—as usual. I could spend the whole day over those things—those roots and grammars, and my beloved Max Müller,—the more

difficult it is, the more I love to grub it out, and get to understand it, whether it will or not. But it is quite true. When I was studying music for a time, because I thought he would hate anybody who didn't understand it, my head ached, and my heart too; and after a couple of hours of it I felt tired to death, simply. How thankful I was one night, when he had been dining at Madame Prénat's, and she insisted on my playing after dinner. I think she must have told him all about it, for when I had done, she asked him if he did not think I had progressed nicely; and he gave a peculiar look, and said, 'Well, Ines, I am sure you have done your best; but if I were you, I wouldn't bother with the piano any more.' I could hardly believe it; and then he said that without any music at all I should be perfectly satisfactory, but with a small quantity

of very bad music, I should be dreadful. And he said I never need touch another note, so far as he was concerned. Yes, I was thankful."

"Exactly. Then why this extravagant delight at the prospect of nearly a week of nothing but music?—because, you know, we shall hear of very little else at Kirkfence. You won't have much chance for your linguistic studies, except perhaps a few hours with Mr. Arkwright."

"It isn't only the music," I told her, "though that is a great deal. Though I cannot play, and cannot sing, and could not tell when an orchestra made mistakes—unless they were very bad,—and though I know nothing about lights and shades, and all that technical stuff, you know, yet those great compositions made me feel as nothing else can—oh, they are glorious! But the chief thing, the greatest thing, is that I

am with you and Monsieur Félix ; you are both so happy in these things, and then I am the same."

"You are happy with both, or with either?"

"Yes."

"Equally happy?" she asked me. She was lying back in a low easy-chair, and I held one of her hands in mine. She had the most perfectly beautiful hands and wrists I ever saw. I made no reply to the question. "Equally happy?" she asked again.

"Don't ask me questions."

"Yes; that question I shall ask. I ask it again, and you must answer it, Ines, my child. Answer it before I tell you why I ask it."

"Well, then, I must tell you the truth. No, I'm not equally happy with either of you. I love to be near you—I do love

you"—I squeezed her hand; "but I'm happiest of all where he is."

"Why, I wonder?"

"Why? I suppose I could give reasons; but I don't know that they would be the true ones."

"You queer child; what do you mean?"

"I mean, there is every reason why I should love him better than any one else. And yet, that is not why I do love him so much, though I love him for that——"

"You are getting involved," said she, as quietly as if we had been engaged in discussing the relative merits of different kinds of bonnet trimmings—as quietly as if she had not known that we were on dangerous ground.

"Not in my own mind. I am quite clear and decided. You gave the reason in that little German song you sang the other day—

“ ‘ Und sprich, woher ist Liebe?
Sie kommt, und sie ist da ! ”

I don't know. I only know that it is so. He has been so good to me that I would die for him in a minute, and yet—I believe I would die for him if he had not been so good to me.”

“ Oh, dear! we are getting quite too subtle in our distinctions,” said Elisabeth, suddenly. “ We'll turn to something more commonplace. And yet, Ines,” she went on quickly, “ you are right, quite right, to feel happier with Felix than with any one else. I don't want to dispute that. I didn't want to make you say you cared as much for me as for him. I'm glad your heart is in the right place. But, darling, you must never talk about these things so openly, to any one but me—do you understand? ” She passed her hand over my head. I smiled as I took possession of it.

“ I never wish to speak to any one but you of them,” said I. And then her generous words seemed to sound again in my ears—“ I didn’t want to make you say you cared as much for me as for him ;” and the feeling which then rushed over my heart sent a sob to my throat.

“ Elisabeth !” I cried, kneeling at her knee, and eagerly looking up into her face, “ what I cannot understand is why *I* should be loved by two such people as you and Monsieur Félix, or cared for by you. What am I, to deserve it ? I know you love me. You often say so—your goodness shows it. I suppose men don’t go about saying they love people—like me ; but he would not be so good to me and give time, *his* time, and thought, and care, to my stupid affairs, if he didn’t care for me a little bit. And why ? It frightens me sometimes, when I think of it, and feel

that I can do nothing, *nothing* for it, except stand still and take it all."

"Oh, you can, Ines! You can go on loving us both. It all helps to make life sweet—love does, of any kind. Perhaps you are doing more than you know—certainly for me—perhaps even for him, by just being what you are. . . . And now, we have talked sentiment enough. I will ring for lights. I have ever so many letters to write before post-time."

Felix returned very late that night from the neighbouring town at which he had been singing, and I did not see him again until the following morning, when he came down late for breakfast, hoping we had not forgotten that we were to spend a happy day in the country.

"We have not forgotten," said Elisabeth. "What sort of a concert had you last night?"

He shrugged his shoulders, looking very cross. "I detest that sort of thing," he said. "I did what I had to do, got away as quickly as I could, and put the whole thing out of my mind as speedily as possible. A lot of dressed-up, vulgar people, who don't care two pins for the music, and don't understand a note of it, but who have more money than they know what to do with, and who go because your humble servant is the fashion, and they have to pay a high price for their tickets. I didn't see one responsive face in the whole crew."

"Wretches!" I exclaimed emphatically.

Elisabeth laughed gently. "Poor Felix!" said she. "Come, Ines, we must get ready to go and see this wonderful young man and his fiddle."

How we went to Moor Isles, what we saw and did and heard there, has already

been related. Except as a pleasant day, spent with my two dearest friends, and as an occasion on which I heard Felix sing, as I loved to hear him—at his best,—the visit did not make very much impression on my mind, though, afterwards, I got into the habit of dating a good many things as having happened before, or after, “that day at Moor Isles.” I pass on to what followed.

CHAPTER IV.

FESTIVAL.

THE Sunday morning, the day after our visit to Thornton-in-Ravenside, was spent in a desultory manner. I remember it chiefly from the fact that Elisabeth played for Felix the accompaniment of a new and very difficult song, which he was to sing at the Festival, by some one whom they both called "poor Hopkinson," the singing of which song was to make or to mar him.

"I do hope it will make him, Felix," she said, pausing. "He is a true musician, and I wonder you aren't a little bit afraid of standing up with 'Thou who hast slept all night upon the storm,' when you reflect

upon his anxiety, and remember how fickle these audiences are. Suppose they just take it into their heads to dislike it, or, worse still, to be profoundly indifferent to it?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "If Hopkinson is anxious, all the more reason why I should not give way to any such feeling. I mean to do my best for him—I can no more."

"No, that's true," said she; and as they tried it over, I realized that it would probably be either a great success or a great failure. It was unlike anything I had ever heard before.

In the evening Elisabeth took us to her People's Recreation Hall, where she fiddled and Felix sang, and thereby a great many people were put into high good humour with themselves and each other.

On the following morning, the Monday, we started for Kirkfence, and early in the afternoon arrived at Lanehead, a rambling old stone house, situated in one corner of the great park belonging to Lord Urmston, whose wonderful library was in the care of Felix's father, old Mr. Arkwright. It was a sweet spot, with a garden opening at one side into delightful rough wood and moorish grass; while from the front windows there was a noble view, commanding distant Wharfedale hills—the sentinels, as it were, which kept guard at the entrance of the enchanted land of moor and fell, castle and abbey, wood and rushing waterfall, which to some partial minds are covered by those two little words, “the North.”

I had my wish, and went to all the concerts—there were seven of them—and heard Felix sing at most of them. When

he was not singing, he occupied a place between Elisabeth and me, and listened to the others.

Though I look back upon that time with pleasure, and with a sense that pleasure and not pain predominated in it, yet the two incidents which stand out in my mind as chiefly connected with it all are painful—more painful than pleasurable, that is.

The first of these incidents took place on the Friday morning, the third day of the Festival. This morning had been devoted to the bringing out of a new work by a popular composer, to the production of which four of the greatest singers of the day had devoted their best efforts—two ladies, one a world-renowned soprano, and the other a scarcely less celebrated contralto; a tenor, *the* tenor, if there was one, and Felix Arkwright. The baritone part

happened to be the most important one of all. Felix had created it, and had surpassed himself, so they all said. I sat and listened ; even I could understand that the work, if not on a par with those of Beethoven, Schumann, or Handel, was still a far from ordinary composition. That was a life—something like a life to live, I decided, as I watched the rapt attention with which they listened to his production of the new and striking music : to be able to stand up, one single man before all that vast concourse of people, looking for all the world like one of themselves—no better, no worse,—not as good, many of them probably thought, for there were proud people present, high up in the ranks of society and of wealth. But one and all, when he stood up and took his part, and sang before them, became as nothing, so it seemed to me. He had the key of a

portal leading into another world ; not only had he that key—some of them, perhaps, had as much as that—but when he had passed that portal, thrown it open, as it were, and invited us to enter with him, he was clearly perceived to be one of the great princes of that world, ruling by divine right—an artist, one of the kings of art.

Elisabeth and I sat rather near the front that morning—too near to hear perfectly well, but not too near for great enjoyment ; we were, in fact, on the front row of the regular reserved seats. But so many places had been applied for by persons coming after the concerts had begun, and by strangers passing through the town, that the committee had caused chairs to be placed here and there in the pretty wide space which lay between the orchestra and this first row of reserved

seats, and these were all occupied, to the number of fifty or sixty.

Elisabeth was fully occupied with her copy of the music, following the work in its completeness, both orchestral and vocal. She took no notice of what passed around her, save to look up now and then with a smile of pleasure at some particularly good effort of orchestra, chorus, or soloists. For my part, I had declined her offer to let me look over the music with her ; I was quite content to sit there, in a delightful, blissful dream, seeing vaguely the great hall ; dimly conscious of the mass of people behind us ; carelessly watching, almost without knowing that I did so, the exquisite and elaborate morning toilettes and gorgeous bonnets of the two lady-soloists—but turning aside every now and then to give a glance at Felix, and to think how very good he had been to procure me this pleasure.

He sat next to Madame Reuter, the great contralto and celebrated beauty ; renowned, too, for her love of good company, her ready wit and social powers. I did not feel quite at ease, somehow, as I saw her bend a little towards him, raising her music before her face, and tell him something—in the nature of a joke, apparently, for her handsome shoulders shook violently, and her face, when it emerged from behind her music, was red ; a look of mirth was on it still ; she lifted her lace handkerchief and wiped tears of enjoyment and amusement from her long dark eyes. He turned to her, surprised, attentive, and amused also, it would seem, when he understood what it was all about. He too laughed, with great enjoyment—not behind his music, but openly, heartily, though of course silently. She looked at him, with her head a little thrown back, and a sort

of expression that appeared to say, "Now, did you ever hear anything like *that*?" And he laughed again, whereupon Madame Reuter appeared almost overcome by her feelings of merriment, and they both seemed to be having rather a good time of it. She turned her fine eyes to him, and flashed her dazzling smile upon him—so it seemed to me; and I did not like it—no, I did not like it, though what business of mine it was, was more than I could have said. Why should he not enjoy good company? And Madame Reuter was reported to be particularly good company.

Tired of watching this (to me) displeasing scene, I turned my eyes resolutely away, and cast them first upon my own long gray suède gloves, which I was wearing with a rather *recherchée* toilette, one chosen a short time ago by Madame Prénat with considerable care, and ap-

proved of by Elisabeth as the very thing to wear at the morning concerts. It was, I remember, all gray—composed of thick soft silk, and some fine thin woollen stuff mixed with it, which fell in soft folds; and with this went a hat of white and gray with many soft, plummy feathers. There was no hue brighter than gray in all the costume, and Elisabeth had laughingly said, “*Ines Grey*,” and patted my shoulder before we had set off. In my hand, I recollect, was a black fan, and this fan I furled and unfurled, and tried to keep my eyes from again, with anxious curiosity, seeking Felix and Madame Reuter.

Looking up at last, in a desperate effort to find some counter-attraction, my own eyes were encountered by another pair—a pair belonging to a young man with a pale, handsome, clean-shaven face, and

a very grave, responsible expression. Next to him sat a young girl, and beyond her an old gentleman with a ruddy countenance and white hair, a high nose, and a determined expression. They formed one party, and occupied some of the extra chairs I have spoken of. Seemingly they were only casual visitors—the men were both in somewhat easy-going garments, and the girl, who resembled the old gentleman, and had scarcely any of the distinction of the younger one, wore a travelling costume of gray tweed made with severe plainness, high starched white linen collar and cuffs, and a little gray toque of cloth and silk crowning her thick flaxen hair. She was not looking at me, but it was at her that I looked, with critical indifference. Her round, good-humoured, rosy face was, I decided, far from intellectual. It was set into an expression of highly proper

and intense want of interest in the music, the people, and the proceedings in general. She looked straight before her; quite serious, quite modest; quite and entirely uninteresting. I hardly knew why I watched her, or her party. Gradually, however, a peculiar sensation took possession of me. I felt as if I had somehow got outside my own body, and was gazing at it from a little distance. She was not like me, nor I like her, I knew. I had not that round face, nor those rosy cheeks; my hair had none of that flaxen tinge; it was, as I often regretfully confessed to myself, of a dull bronzy hue. The only point in which any resemblance between us existed was in the eyes. She had not the pale blue eyes that might have been expected to go with that hair and complexion, but fine, rather dark gray ones. I also had rather dark gray eyes. I could

see them in my glass, and Felix sometimes called me "Gray-Eyes." They were very like hers. And as mine once more met those of the young man, I saw, startled, that his also were gray—just the same kind and colour. They were, then, brother and sister. They were so young that the old squire, or whatever he was, looked too old to be their father—probably their grandfather, I decided.

And at this juncture there was a slight pause. The chorus, which, almost without my knowing it, had been singing loud and long, rustled gently down into their places, and Felix stood up. I forgot the party of strangers, and looked at him again, as he rose, with a slight smile still on his face; and his eyes too fell upon the strangers. The smile faded instantly—a curious expression came over his face—it seemed to grow a little hard. Then another kind of

smile, not an altogether pleasant smile, crossed it. Then, from the strangers, he looked directly at me, caught my wide-open eyes eagerly scrutinizing him, all at once seemed to remember himself, gave me a nod and a friendly look, and then, losing sight of us all, turned to the conductor, with his eyes fixed upon his *bâton*, and in another moment there came the notes of a magnificent aria in the new "Jason" composition—a composition founded on the words of a well-known living poet—

" O Death, that makest Life so sweet ;
 O Fear, with mirth before thy feet !
 What have ye yet in store for us,
 The conquerors, the glorious ? "

It was superb, I felt, as I listened with rapture to the ever-recurring strain—

" What have ye yet in store for us—for us—in store for us ? "

I, too, forgot it all—all the people, the

place, the time, and everything else, in listening. The *scena*, of which this was the first part, was a rather long one. Madame Reuter had to take a part in it. They sang divinely together, these two great artists—sang in a style to make us all forget time and place, and whether it was night or day, and all our outside interests and passions and concerns, and to think and feel only of and with them and the great tragedy that they unfolded to us. With the end of their duet came also the end of the first part of the concert. It was a long and trying piece of work, and when it was over, there came a pause of half an hour for rest and refreshment. Every one rose, rustled and bustled about. Chorus and instrumentalists fled, after the prolonged applause was over; the great orchestra, lately so crowded with life, now lay revealed,

empty, save for the scattered desks and silent instruments.

I sat where I was, dreaming, and wondering what it all meant—if it were really all summed up in the words of Felix's opening song, "O Death, that makest Life so sweet!" I did not think it was death that made life so sweet, but just life itself, strong and full, brimming over with eagerness and interest. I could not believe that it would ever end, this continuous, undulating sea of music and melody, and of the grandest ideas and emotions. And, filled with these thoughts, I leaned forward, with my chin on my hand, and slowly opened and shut my fan as I meditated. I was roused by a touch on my shoulder—

"Ines!"

I looked up, startled, and confronted Felix; he was looking at me, and his hand was on my shoulder.

“ Yes ? ” I said.

“ I see you are in a brown study, or a blue dream, or something of the kind ; but just pull yourself together, my child, and take my arm, and come with me for two minutes. I want you.”

I rose, looking at him, I dare say, with tragic solemnity of aspect, for he laughed and said he had no evil designs of any kind ; he wanted to introduce me to some *friends*—with great emphasis.

Elisabeth looked at us also, in inquiring surprise. He apologized for leaving her, but said he would speedily return. And then he drew my hand through his arm, and I mechanically walked on by his side, gathering in the fact that he was a little bit excited himself, for he had become slightly paler than usual, though he was perfectly quiet and self-possessed.

It was not far that he led me ; up to the

old gentleman, the young gentleman, and the girl, whom I had already been observing. The two young people were standing up, looking about them ; the old man remained seated. The brother and sister, I saw, watched us as we approached them ; the girl with mild curiosity, the young man with greater interest. And as we drew nearer, the old gentleman, turning his head, caught sight of us also ; his eyes remained fixed upon Felix, and a deep purple flush spread all over his face. He looked angry, embarrassed, annoyed in the extreme, but not surprised. He half rose, as if driven from his position by some sudden blow—than sat down again. His eyes dilated, became round and angry, and glared upon us, so it seemed to me, as we approached. I could not help glancing once more towards Felix. He was smiling slightly ; his good-humoured

provoking expression had again come over his face. We now stood close to this group of three. Felix, looking directly at the old man, bowed to him, and addressed him, and I listened.

“It is at least ten years, Mr. Grey, since I had the honour of meeting you, and though I have not forgotten you in the least, I may have to recall myself to your recollection——”

“Not at all,” was the reply, after a pause, during which he seemed to struggle with himself, and then decide to brave it—whatever “it” might be—out. “Remember it perfectly. Did not know you were to be here. I don’t know much about these things; we heard there was a festival going on here, and my granddaughter wished to hear some of this new music, and——”

“Yes!” smiled Felix, in his most amiable

tones ; while I felt myself growing rigid, partly from surprise, partly from dismay, as the facts of the situation suddenly flashed into my mind. Felix had never made any concealment about my relations, and the fact that when they had refused to receive me, he had, after returning to England from Paris, sought an interview with Mr. Grey, and said he wished to adopt me, and Mr. Grey had sullenly said he might do as he pleased in the matter—that, for his part, he thought the school he had proposed was provision enough for me. This, I realized, was my grandfather, as well as that flaxen-haired girl's—she and the youth were my cousins—the children of my father's elder brother. I had heard of them vaguely. I had been far too happy and satisfied with my lot as it was, ever to speculate with any interest or curiosity about them. The scene appeared

to be a revelation to them, as well as to me. They gazed at Felix with open-eyed astonishment, and turned to their grandfather, as if asking for an explanation.

“I hope the new music has not displeased Miss Grey,” Felix went on blandly ; and as my hand began to tremble, and he felt it on his arm, he drew it a little more firmly through his, glanced kindly at me, and went on—

“Judging from the only member of your family with whom I am intimately acquainted, I should think that music is not very much in their line. This young lady, at least, has little knowledge of it.”

I was breathless—I felt as if things would soon begin to swim round me, but I recollected Felix’s words, “Pull yourself together,” and I did so, and met the unwilling, angry eyes of the old gentleman with a steady, unflinching gaze.

“Let me present her to you!” Felix went on, still smiling. “This is your granddaughter, Ines Grey—and I may take the same opportunity of thanking you for not refusing to leave her in my charge ten years ago. The trust has made me a happier man; it has given joy to others as well as to me, and I don’t think she has been a very unhappy girl—have you, Ines?” He laid his hand upon mine, and looked down at me with the kindest of smiles. I felt that so far I had betrayed no outward emotion—inwardly I was trembling like a leaf in the wind. I clasped my other hand tightly over his, and said, somehow, my own voice sounding strange to me as I heard it—

“You know I have never had an unhappy hour—thanks to you.”

I stopped; if I had tried to say another word, I should have burst into a storm of

nervous weeping. I clung to his arm and was silent.

“Ines is a truth-telling person. I never knew her to utter the shadow of a falsehood,” said Felix, pleasantly. “It may gratify you to know for yourself that she is not unhappy—it *may*. I always impute the best motives, in dealing with others. But I see this encounter has been a little too much for her—too much of a surprise, so I will take her away again. Good-day. I am delighted to have renewed our acquaintance.”

He was turning, to my intense thankfulness. I managed to make some kind of an inclination of my head, and to feel a sense of profound relief that it was all over; when the young gentleman, who had been watching the proceedings with the most lively interest, spoke to Felix.

“Pardon me an instant. I think, sir”

—turning to his grandfather—“it is only fair that you should allow us to make our cousin’s acquaintance, and you might explain the circumstances to us afterwards. At any rate, I shall feel much hurt if I am forbidden to do this.”

There was a pause. The scene was becoming unbearable to me. At last Mr. Grey, with a mighty effort, said—

“If you wish it, Maurice. As you say, I can explain later. This young lady is your cousin, Miss—Miss——”

“Ines,” observed Felix, obligingly.

“Miss Ines Grey. And this,” he added, turning to me, “is my grandson, Maurice Grey—and his sister, Maud.”

Maud Grey looked at me, not with much emotion of any kind, it seemed to me. Inasmuch as there was something irregular in the scene, she disapproved of it; otherwise it concerned her but little.

She inclined her head slightly to me, without speaking, and drew nearer to her grandfather. Maurice, with a smile of great sweetness, which wonderfully lighted up his pale face, held out his hand.

“Will you shake hands with me, Cousin Ines?” he asked.

I looked speechlessly at Felix, who surveyed the young fellow with an expression of great goodwill, and laughed a little as he said—

“Why do you hesitate, child?” And I at once put out my hand, but silently.

“I only knew vaguely that I had a cousin somewhere,” said the young man, very seriously. “This is not a time for going into explanations, but, if I am allowed, I shall have the honour of making your further acquaintance, and that of Mr. Felix also.”

“That will give me great pleasure,” said

Felix, as he took out his card-case. "That is my club. I shall be delighted either to see or to hear from you there. Ines, you have had enough. We will go back to Mrs. Reichardt."

With a bow, and a general "good morning," he this time effectually led me away, and back to Elisabeth's side. The whole scene had been played out in less than ten minutes. I felt as if it had taken a year. I sat down, and Felix stood before us, looking at both Elisabeth and me.

"You were a good girl, Ines," said he, "very good. I could not have wished you to behave better. Don't worry about it. It's all right. Don't think about them again."

I was speechless. A fear had entered my heart. He went on to Elisabeth, with an amused laugh—

“I happened to catch sight of this child's affectionate and solicitous relatives, and I could not resist taking the opportunity of showing her to them—especially to him. Bless my life! It has been too much for him—they are going; he and the demoiselle—the girl in gray, Lisa,—she and Ines seem to have a similar taste in colours,” he laughed again. “The youngster remains. He has designs upon our further acquaintance. I beg your pardon, sir?” he added, discovering that his father was saying something to him. For my part, I had drawn close to Mr. Arkwright's side, and clasped my hands over his arm.

“I hope, Felix,” said he to his son, “that you have not been inflicting needless pain on any one. Ines looks none the happier for this scene that you have put her through.”

“It is all right,” I whispered hastily, and Felix smiled.

“Pain!” he repeated. “What pain could be connected with the fact of a grandfather making the acquaintance of our Ines? It ought to be pleasure unmixed.”

“*Ought* to be, perhaps,” said his father; and Elisabeth, though smiling, shook her head a little.

“If you are all going to censure me,” said Felix, “I had better withdraw; and, indeed, I can’t stay any longer. But aren’t any of you going to have anything—no wine, or biscuits, or sandwiches?”

We all declined, and he then said again that he would withdraw himself from our disapproving glances.

“No one is disapproving,” I interposed, in a loud whisper. “It is all right. I said so before; and I shall be all right, too, in a minute.”

“Of course!” he said, and went away.

I steadily averted my eyes from the direction of those three chairs, though I knew that two of them were now empty. I would not look. I did not wish ever again to see the people who had occupied them. But I was vividly conscious that the young man, Maurice Grey, who was, it seemed, my cousin, and wished to make my further acquaintance, remained in his place, and, without looking at him, I was aware that he looked frequently at me. But when the concert was over, and we left the hall, he did not again accost us. We went away at once, driving out to Lanehead, to take lunch and rest, before going down again to the evening performance.

It was this evening that Felix was to sing the song which had been composed by “poor Hopkinson,” as he and Elisabeth

always called this young composer. They had discussed it so much that I had grown deeply interested in it all myself, and had almost forgotten my unwelcome relatives in the excitement of expectation, when we went down again in the evening. "Poor Hopkinson" was somewhere in the hall, it was understood. As we took our places my eyes fell once more upon those three chairs. I began to remember again. But the persons who had sat in them that morning were not there in the evening. The chairs were occupied by three men; one, by his wild appearance, dishevelled hair, and not too dazzlingly white linen, an æsthetic critic; the second, a youngish-looking man with laughing eyes and a nearly bald head, who had a small drawing-book, and was evidently taking views of the chorus and some of the soloists. Felix seemed to know him; he caught his eye and nodded

to him, whereupon he promptly began to take Felix's portrait, while some of the young ladies of the chorus giggled, as young ladies sometimes will, with small reason. The third man was a natty-looking little Roman Catholic priest, who had the score of the music that was being sung, and who appeared to appreciate it all thoroughly, and sat with his eyes half closed, drinking it in, but who woke up thoroughly when at length the last number of the first part of the concert was reached, and Felix stood up to sing a song, entitled in the programme, "The Man-of-War Bird."

There was a little stir and bustle. The programmes rustled about ; murmurs were heard. "Man-of-War Bird — Whitman, Hopkinson,—who *is* Whitman?" (This, it must be remembered, is a good many years ago.) "Who is Hopkinson? Hop-

kinson—oh! don't you know? He has done some good things, but no one knows anything about them. Might as well have done nothing at all. Well, let's hear this. I wonder what it is?"

"If only it isn't too intellectual for them!" Elisabeth said in my ear, with something like a groan. "That's all I am afraid of. You know, after all, they are not intellectual, for all their ravings about classical composers. I shall not look at him, Ines. He really means this, and I don't want to disturb him."

I nodded. I was of the same mind. The song was accompanied by the full orchestra. Some strange phrases and modulations, which instantly took my fancy, were heard, and then Felix sang this song—

"Thou who hast slept all night upon the storm,
Waking renewed on thy prodigious pinions,

(Burst the wild storm? above it thou ascendedst,
 And rested on the sky, thy slave, that cradled thee,)
 Now a blue point, far, far in heaven floating,
 As to the light emerging here on deck I watch thee,
 (Myself a speck, a point in the world's floating vast).

“ Far, far at sea,
 After the night's fierce drifts have strewn the shore
 with wrecks,
 With reappearing day as now so happy and serene,
 The rosy and elastic dawn, the flashing sun,
 The limpid spread of air cerulean,
 Thou also reappearest.

“ Thou born to match the gale (thou art all wings),
 To cope with heaven and earth and sea and
 hurricane,
 Thou ship of air, that never furl'st thy sails,
 Days, and even weeks untired and onward, through
 spaces, realms gyrating,
 At dusk thou lookst on Senegal, at morn, America,
 That sport'st amid the lightning-flash and thunder-
 cloud,
 In them, in thy experiences, hadst thou my soul,
 What joys ! what joys were thine ! ”

He ceased to sing, and I was sure that Elisabeth was looking and feeling anxious as to the verdict of the public, for whom

she had hoped it might not be too intellectual. Fortunately, we had not very long to wait for the said verdict. It certainly was intellectual music, but perhaps it had in it also the mysterious quality which constitutes popularity, whatever that may be. Perhaps the audience were disposed to refuse no favour to their present supreme favourite, Felix Arkwright. So far, he had carried everything before him.

He did so once again. There was a momentary pause ; a terrible one to Elisabeth and me, and perhaps to "poor Hopkinson" also. Then the applause burst out ; it was loud, long, and persistent, and Felix made no ado about yielding to the cries for a repetition of the song. He sang it again, rather better than before—there was a perfect fury of delight and applause ; and loud cries for the composer, who at last did emerge from his corner,

and confront the now vociferous and delighted crowd. And he also shook hands with the singer, with a look I shall never forget. It was the end of the Friday's concerts, and "poor Hopkinson's" reputation as a composer of songs was made. We departed, rejoicing.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE WOOD.

WE departed, rejoicing, as I say, but not together. Old Mr. Arkwright and I went back to Lanehead, in company; Felix and Elisabeth were both bidden to a supper-party, given by a common friend, who was that night entertaining a large number of the artists who had sung or played. We arrived at the quiet old house, said good night, and went to our respective rooms. I fell asleep very soon after I had gone to bed, and had not the faintest idea at what hour the other two returned. But, though I fell asleep soon, as one may, very often, even in a state of high nervous excitement,

still, the excitement was there—the excitement arising from a combination of great and long-sustained enjoyment and pleasurable emotions produced by the noble music, and the fear and subtle pain and apprehension mixed with it, contributed by the episode of the morning—the discovery of my, to me, most unwelcome relations ; the recollection of Maurice Grey’s look, which seemed to tell me that he, at any rate, did not consider the matter at an end. All these things were still in my mind, and began to agitate my brain the instant I opened my eyes in the morning. I had slept for a good many hours, and woke very wide awake indeed. As soon as I was conscious, I knew that sleep had quite fled. I lay still for a little while, my hands clasped behind my head, my eyes fixed on the dimly visible ceiling of my old-fashioned bedroom, with the long beam running

across the roof. It must be very early in the morning. By-and-by the light grew stronger, and presently I heard a clock strike six. Then a gleam of sunlight crept through the blinds, and played upon the wall and ceiling. Then I heard the stealthy step of the matutinal housemaid creep downstairs, and presently distant sounds as of grates poked out, pails carried about, and other household noises. I closed my eyes again, with the reflection of the sun-beam still in them, and almost immediately there arose in my brain the distinctly visible picture, with all its details complete, of a woodland glade, the trees of which were covered with fiery autumn tints : the grass of it was soft, fine, and short. Banks of fern, bracken, and autumn gorse spread away into remoter glades, and I saw myself standing beside a silent, dark-looking pool, part of whose surface was diversified with

brilliant green slime and weeds. This picture was vivid enough ; so vivid that with a smile I opened my eyes ; said half-aloud to myself, " The very thing—just a little surprise for them at breakfast," and, unclasping my hands, I promptly arose, pulled up the blind, and looked forth on a glorious dry October morning, precursor of an equally glorious day. There had been frost in the night ; it lingered yet on the grass and on the leaves of the autumn trees, but the sky overhead was of a magnificent deep blue, and from the meadows and hillocks all around the mist was rolling away in soft, silvery wreaths.

I felt so strong, so happy, so capable of going through life with credit and renown, and of not yielding to adverse circumstances ; it was a glorious, comforting mood to awaken in. I dressed as speedily as might be, put on a little fur-trimmed

cap, seized my warm plaid, opened my door softly, and as softly stole downstairs. Sometimes old Mr. Arkwright rose early and took a morning walk. I hoped I was beforehand with him on this occasion, and it seemed that I was. Perhaps he was tired with the unwonted excitement of the past few days, and had slept later than usual. All the life I saw was in the form of Mary the housemaid, who, with broom and pails, was just coming through the hall, with the obvious intention of cleaning the steps.

“Lawk, Miss Grey!” she observed, seeing me.

“Open the door, Mary, as quietly as possible. I am going for a walk before breakfast. And if any of the others come down, do not say that you saw me.”

In another moment I was out, in the delicious sharp morning air, the gravel of

the drive crunching frostily under my feet. It was not very far to the spot I wanted to reach. A ten minutes' walk through a field, rough and moorish, brought me to the gate leading into the woodland I had dreamed of; and here it was, even more beautiful than my dream of it. Such handiwork of nature; such forms, such tints, such traceries—such lights and shades, melting into and out of the dim blue mist and into the sunshiny spots! I knew it well, and felt happy and at home there. London—the gray square, the dim-looking house, the outlook upon buildings and streets—Madame Prénat and my professors, all seemed very far away, and belonging to another world.

The wild flowers were over—all but a few autumn yellows and reds, but there was this endless variety of beautiful leaves and twigs, grass and mosses, fading ferns,

delicate tendrils—and the pond, just as I had expected it to be; I knew it from many an old holiday ramble—many an hour's rest by its banks on sunny days, when the coolness of the wood had been grateful. It was still and dark where the water showed; brightly green and yellow where it was grown over with slime and weeds. The pond, somehow, was not as delightful as when I had last seen it; the rest of the surroundings were, if anything, more so.

I had wandered about the glade for some little time, picking here a leaf and there a twig; when suddenly, at a little distance in the wood, I perceived a treasure—a cluster of harebells, and not far away a few late tufts of heather. With a joyful exclamation, I made for them, gathered the flowers till not one was left, and then turned in search of fresh plunder.

“Well!” said a voice behind me. “So you are here, after all, though I could hardly believe Mary’s statement to that effect. What has brought you out so early?”

I was still stooping over my flowers, and by the time that I had started in my surprise, and had had time to feel the jump that my heart gave, I had had time also to pull myself together as on a former occasion. I stood up, looked round, and said tranquilly, as I stripped some leaves away from my bouquet—

“Why, did you think I should never find out such a place as this? I don’t know why, I am sure.”

“Oh yes, I will trust you to have found it out long ago. The only thing is, there are times and seasons for everything. Seven o’clock in the morning——”

“Is a good time, and so you seem to

think," said I. "And yet, I should suppose it was much worse for you than for me, for you have got a voice to take care of, while I have none—of that kind."

"Listen to her, telling me to take care of my capital," he remarked, half laughing. "Then you didn't know that I have been here, and generally a good deal farther, every morning since we arrived?"

"No, indeed, I didn't," I said, honestly astonished.

"It is one of my old country habits. One loses it in town sometimes, unavoidably, but here—there's something that makes it worth one's while to renew it."

"And is this your favourite spot?" I asked sentimentally.

"It is *a* favourite spot of mine," he said decisively. "But please tell me what you are doing here."

"I came because I awoke very early,

and remembered how beautiful the leaves and things were here, and I thought I would gather some—for you and Mrs. Reichardt—and for Mr. Arkwright—for breakfast, you know.”

“For breakfast! What an extraordinary notion! Is thy servant an ox that he should eat this thing?”

“For your plates, that was all,” I explained, holding up a small bunch of harebells and leaves.

“For our plates, there will probably be bacon, or fish, or something—or game. My father understands a real Yorkshire breakfast,” he said meditatively.

“You know perfectly well what I mean,” I argued; “but, if you like, I will explain it to you—Madame Prénat always says we should try to explain ourselves—it often shows how very vague and formless was the thought behind our equally vague and

formless words. Therefore, what I mean is this, Monsieur Félix; a present of flowers is perhaps of not much intrinsic value, but it may mean affection and esteem—at any rate, it is a little kindly attention. Autumn leaves are as beautiful, I think, as the most splendid flowers. I love to look at them. I thought that you—and the others—might also like to look at them. I was going to make three little bouquets, and lay them on your plates, just to show that I had been thinking of you. That would not have prevented you from taking bacon upon your plates afterwards——”

“I prefer a hot plate for bacon,” he said, after looking at me attentively; “cold plates for bouquets; hot plates for bacon.”

“Very well,” I said, trying to cover my nervousness—for I was nervous, though I could not have told why—by a prolonged

stream of talk. "If you insist upon being so very exact, I could have laid the bouquets *beside* the plates—then, whether they had been hot or cold would not have mattered. It seems to me that it shows a want of respect for a beautiful landscape, and for lovely flowers and leaves, to be talking incessantly of bacon and hot plates."

"Well, it was not I who brought it on. When you are told that you are to have a bunch of leaves and grass for your breakfast, you have to show that you don't intend to submit to any such thing. The worm will turn. . . . But," he added, leaning with his back against a tree-trunk, and half smiling as he looked at me, "there is another use to which your pretty things might have been put—in my case, at any rate. I feel almost hurt that you have not yourself proposed it."

“And what is that, pray?” I asked curiously.

“A buttonhole, for this morning’s concert.”

“This—mine? Do you mean that you would, really?” I stammered.

“Would what?” he asked, beginning to laugh.

“Would wear it, if I arranged it for you?”

“Why, certainly. I have to sing ‘The Old Manoah’ this morning. Surely autumn tints would be most appropriate for that part.”

“But,” said I, holding out my leaves and harebells, and looking critically at them, “these are poor little things, after all. When you get down to the Hall, you will find, as usual, a lot of lovely flowers—hot-house flowers—ferns, roses, and——”

“Well, yes. They generally are there,

by some means. Did you ever know me to use any of them, for that purpose? It is uncommonly kind and disinterested in whoever sends them; and so thinks the Matron of the Children's Hospital here, only I felt as if I were posing under false pretences when I got a note from her yesterday, thanking me for my lavish generosity to them in the matter of flowers. She shall have whatever there may be, this morning; and I will have your autumn leaves, Ines—if you will give me them, that is, of course.” He stretched out his hand.

“*If* I will give you them!” said I, striving to conceal my delight in this arrangement. “Wait—they are not ready yet. I will arrange them after breakfast. But are you *sure* that when you see lovely Dijon and Marshal Niel roses, you will not——”

“*Va pour la feuille morte!*” he said

decidedly. "There, you have gathered a great wisp of stuff. You will give me a little bit of it, and I shall wear it, and think with pleasure of Ines and of the old pond, in which I managed nearly to drown myself twenty years ago. . . . Now, Ines"—his tone suddenly changed into one of gravity—"I hate subterfuges and pretences. I have something to say to you, and I followed you here; I asked Mary if she knew whether you were down, and she told me in which direction you had gone. There's only a short time, and it has to be done. I go to London to-morrow."

I had expected this. By the chill that fell upon my heart now, I found how I had also dreaded it.

"And before I go, I have, as I remarked, something to say to you—something which I expect you will hate, just at the moment."

“If it is anything you want me to do, I am sure I shall not hate it,” said I, stoutly.

“Yes, you will. And, first, I’ll ask you a question. Do you trust me quite and entirely, and believe that what I do, in your concerns, I really believe to do for the best?”

“Yes, I do, and always shall.”

“Very good—yes, you look as if you meant it. You like Madame Prénat, don’t you?”

“I love her dearly.”

“That also is well. She is so clever that I am rather afraid of her, though I must admit that she has never made me feel my inferiority in any disagreeable manner.”

“What *do* you mean?”

“What I say. And you find yourself happy and contented with Madame Prénat?”

“Y—yes.” My heart began to beat, I hardly knew why, and I drew a little nearer to him. He was silent for a moment, not looking at me. Then, slowly, and yet kindly—

“Ines, I am going to place you in Madame Prénat’s hands, and out of my own, for the next two years.”

He then looked at me with a very determined expression, still leaning against the tree-trunk, and plunging his hands into his pockets. I did not quite take it in at first, and said, in some surprise—

“But, surely, I am in Madame Prénat’s hands, and have been, for the last three years?”

“Yes—yes,” he said, rather hurriedly.

“But you forget. I said, ‘out of mine.’”

I gazed at him, wondering what in the world he meant, and finally asked him.

“I wonder you don’t see what I mean.

I mean, you will stay with her—I have such confidence in her doing what is right, and we—you and I—will not—I mean—why, in Heaven’s name, do you look at me in that way—as if I were a maniac ? ”

“ I don’t know what you mean. Tell me quickly,” I said, in a voice which sounded strange to myself. But I did know what he meant. It had flashed in a moment into my mind, and I felt as if the knowledge paralyzed me.

“ During that time, I think it will be best for you to put me out of your mind altogether. I don’t say, forget me—I don’t want you to forget me—but live and act as if I were not there. I do not intend to see anything of you. It is only for a short time—you will not be twenty at the end of two years. But two years at your age make a great difference. You want to know my reasons for it, I dare say—— ”

“Only if you wish to tell me them,” I interrupted, in a voice which somehow would not rise above a whisper. “I said I trusted you, and I do, but——”

“But what?”

“One may trust, and yet feel as if one were being killed,” said I, dropping my hands at my sides, and clenching them tightly.

“*Killed!*” he repeated, with a not very successful attempt at a laugh. “I am going to tell you just what I think you ought to hear. Ines, I am so much older than you that I might almost be your father; you heard what I said to Mr. Grey yesterday—how glad I was that he had let me take care of you all this time. That is true, but it does not hinder the fact that I think you have become too dependent upon me—morally, I mean, child, of course,” he hastily added, with a shocked look, as

he caught sight of my face. "You let yourself depend too much on my judgment, and refer things too much to me, even in your own mind—yes, you do. I know it. I wish you to get out of that habit, if possible, and to that end it is that I mean to commit you entirely to Madame Prènat's charge. And I wish her to refer less to me in her dealings with you and your concerns—do you understand?"

Yes! Oh yes, I understood; and, what is more, I did not misunderstand. It never entered my head to think that he meant all this otherwise than as he had said—for my good, entirely for my good. I could, an' if I would, have twisted his words bravely into stabs of unkindness, but it did not occur to me to do so. He had thought the matter over; evidently in the midst of his numberless engagements and occupations he had found time to do

so. The decision he had come to was, to me, an agonizing one. That it was right, I never doubted.

“As for our not meeting,” he went on, “I have my own good reasons for that too, which I do not think it necessary to tell you. You may trust them. Do you agree, then?”

“If you wish it.” How was it that my tongue declined to utter anything that I really wished to say, and could only in measured tones speak the coldest common-places?

“*If* I wish it! That is not trust, Ines. That is submission, because you can't help it—just the one thing that I hoped I should never see between you and me.”

“Please forgive me,” I said, all in the same toneless kind of voice. “It is because I am surprised—it is not because I don't trust you. I am not to see you

for two years. But I may write to you—to tell you how I get on?” (This I proposed as if it were an irresistibly tempting offer.) “And you will write to me?”

“Better not. No—we will not write.”

By this time I had got to the resolution to agree absolutely to every condition he laid down. That was trust. It seemed to me that he was dissatisfied because I did not display also satisfaction. It was beyond my power to give that.

“No?” I said. “And never hear anything about you? You don’t mean that?”

“I think it would—well, if you ever come here in the holidays at any time you would hear of me—enough and to spare.”

“And Elisabeth——”

“Well, if she were in London, she would go and call upon you. And you could write to each other, you know. I don’t want you to go and stay with her.”

“We could write to each other—for two years. And when the two years were over—if ever they did get over——”

“Oh, we should meet, of course. My purpose would have been accomplished, and I have little doubt that you would thank me for having come to this decision.”

“I wonder why?” I said, beneath my breath. Then aloud—“I should stay with Madame Prénat——”

“And by attending to all her wishes, show me that you do trust me, Ines.”

I stood still for a moment, and then lifted my hand to put it within his.

“I will do exactly as you say,” said I.

“But do not go so white—as if I were wishful to make you utterly miserable,” he said beseechingly.

“I am sure you wish nothing of the kind. I know you wish me to be happy.

And I know you are doing right, if this is what you have decided upon. But I *cannot* pretend that I like it," I said passionately. "I'll bear it. I'll do what I ought, but——"

"But my sweet Ines will show her old friend that she thinks him a brute, all the time," he said, in so sorrowful and pained a voice as I had never heard from him before. The agony that seized me at that moment was beyond all description. I felt hysterical as I forced a smile and retorted—

"Because she cannot bear to think of not seeing you for two years, that shows that—I—think you—a brute! Have I—have I behaved wrongly in some way?" I asked, going nearer to him, and looking at him very earnestly.

"No, you have not," he said emphatically, and flushing crimson. "Why will you persist in looking upon it as a punishment? I cannot explain to you. There

are things one can't explain. Trust me! I wonder how much oftener I must say it. And it is the only thing to be said, too."

"I trust you—I do. But I cannot sing for joy. You seem to think I ought to do that as well. What can I say? What can I do?"

"You can smile, or try to. And you can go to Madame Prénat, and make yourself happy with her."

"I can *work* with Madame Prénat," I said, the first gleam of light breaking over the darkness which encompassed me. "I can work. You have nothing against that?"

"Nothing. Only don't overdo it. You are different from some girls, Ines. Now, while we are about it, I'll give you the only advice I know of, about how to guide yourself—just the same that I should give to a lad if I were sending him off to school.

You will find that though Madame may be a good friend to you, yet you will have to depend a great deal on your own good sense and right feelings in some things. And all I can say, is, never tell a lie, by word or by deed. Never forsake a friend; never think, whatever you are working at, that you can do it perfectly, and don't need to trouble yourself any further about it. If you ever give way to that, you'll find yourself outstripped by the most stupid of your rivals, when it comes to a test. What is it, besides?—fear God and honour the king—you can translate that for yourself. Walk straight, and you'll come out all right at the end. I trust you absolutely. You have never disappointed me before, and I am sure you will not now. Come back to the house. Heaven only knows what time of day it has got to.”

I moved, to do as he suggested. I had

been standing, rigid, in the same place, all the time, save for approaching one or two steps nearer to him. When I came to step forward, I found myself feeling as if I should fall down. I turned away from him, leaned my hands and my face against the trunk of a silver birch which stood hard by, and cried and sobbed silently and bitterly for a minute or two, till he laid his hand upon my shoulder, and once more said, in a voice of pain—

“You said you trusted me?”

“So I did—so I do. But this——”

“And what is trust for, if not to carry one through some such time as this?” he asked.

“It will carry me through—by-and-by. Go back, and leave me. I’ll come directly.”

“No, certainly not,” he answered quickly. “You will come back with me, now.” He

took me by the shoulders, and gently, very gently, turned me round. I could only put my hands before my face, still crying.

“You are determined to make it hard for me, whatever it may be for you,” he suddenly said, very quietly, but in a tone which instantly dried my tears, and caused me to look up sharply. I saw his face, quite white, and, as it seemed to me, stern. He looked at me, and then exclaimed, “Ines! Well, I ought not to have chosen just this time to do it, I suppose. I’m a fool. So Madame Prénat would tell me. So Elisabeth doubtless will tell me. No doubt you are faint and famishing, as well as miserable. And it is cold!” he added, looking round him with a slight shiver, though the sun was shining more brilliantly than ever. “Come, my—Ines. Give me your hand and come with me.”

I dried my eyes, and gave him my hand.

He drew it through his arm, and gently stroked my cheek, saying softly, "You have always been so good. You will not fail me now."

And I felt that I should not. Though the full desolation of the parting was yet to come, I felt that I should not fail. Arm-in-arm we walked a few paces, and then he said suddenly—

"You will not fail. But, my child, you grieve far too much about it. Ines, when you set up a human being in your fancy as you, in your enthusiastic young heart, have set me up, and will see nothing imperfect in that human being, it means disappointment and disgust and disillusion, in the end, as surely as a bright sun means daylight."

"Don't," I said. "Let me think what I like."

"I suppose you will think what you

like, at any rate." He sighed. It was not often that I had heard Felix sigh.

"Did you mean to leave me here to-morrow?" I asked, as we drew nearer the house.

"I thought so. Why cut your holiday short because I am obliged to leave?"

"You are going to sing somewhere on Monday?"

"At the —— concert, in London—yes. Concerts every night next week, and then the opera begins at the ——."

"Don't think I'm tiresome if I ask you to let me go back with you to-morrow, instead of staying here. I would rather go straight to Madame Prénat, and begin my work again."

"Surely the fresh air here would do you more good——"

"Please!" I said persuasively.

"So be it," he replied. "See that you

wire to Madame while we are in Kirkfence this morning. The train to-morrow leaves at one o'clock."

We went into the garden, into the house, and I ran upstairs to take off my things before going in to breakfast. What a white, tear-stained face was that I caught sight of as I passed my looking-glass! I bathed it roughly with cold water, scrubbed it with a stiff towel, and, having thus heightened its beauty, repaired to the breakfast-room. Felix was there, already seated. I said good morning to Mr. Arkwright, kissed Elisabeth, who pressed my hand in silence, and went round to my place. From that hand-pressure, and from the fact that neither Elisabeth nor Mr. Arkwright asked me a question, I concluded that Felix must have given some brief outline of the state of affairs.

Lying on my plate was the greater

portion of my collection of leaves, ferns, and wild flowers. Feeling my face crimson, I looked across at Felix. He smiled.

“You dropped them,” said he. “You never saw me pick them up; but I do not wish to lose my little bouquet, if you will still give it to me.”

It was kind; kindly meant and kindly said, but it made me feel as if my heart would break, and also as if Felix Arkwright were farther away from me—more apart than he had ever been before.

Despite all my efforts at composure, it was a sad and silent meal. I hated myself for not being able to behave as if nothing had happened—for having to look dull and sad, and so distressing the others. But I could not be glad, or look as if I were glad. I had not yet had time to begin any speculations as to Felix’s

reasons for pursuing this course with me. I felt only the crushing grief of the thing itself. We were so late at breakfast that I had no opportunity of speaking to Elisabeth before it was time to go down to the concert. I sat it out, but, oh, with what different feelings from the happy ones of the past few days! "For two years—two years—two whole years!" was the refrain which for me ran through all the music; and when at the end the whole audience, with chorus, soloists, and orchestra, stood up and sang "God Save the Queen!" as it seldom is sung, the triumphant notes seemed only to peal forth the one dreadful fact—for two long, weary years I shall not see him, speak to him, or hear from him. And who knows what may have happened before it is all over? I was glad I had chosen at once to go to

London. I could work, I knew, but I could not play, under the load of this trial.

And to London I went, with Felix, on Sunday afternoon. We had not so much conversation as on our journey down to Irkford; though we did talk a good deal. I would fain have left the hateful topic out of our discourse altogether—kept it as a good grim skeleton, and dragged it out and examined it whenever I wanted to work myself into a state of misery about anything. Not so Felix. He was far too sane and right-minded, too direct in his notions, to do any such thing. He talked about it openly; asked me point-blank how I should chiefly employ my time, because, he said, he should like to have some idea as to what I was doing with myself. He said cheerfully that Madame

Prénat knew all his wishes on the subject ; he reposed entire confidence in her, and I might be sure that whatever she suggested would receive his sanction.

To all of which I, of course, assented ; and then it seemed but a moment while the dreadful cab jogged us through the dim gray streets and squares to the door of Madame Prénat's house—another moment only before we stood in her drawing-room, while she greeted us, self-possessed, calm, and with the suggestion of a reserve of power beneath her quiet manner which impressed me anew after each absence from her.

“I will not stay—no, I will not sit down,” said Felix. “Good-bye, Ines. Lay my admonitions to heart. Ask Madame Prénat if they are not good. We shall meet again, when it's over.”

He took my hand, looked at me for a moment, as I stood silently before him.

“*Auf wiedersehen!*” he said, stooping, and kissing my cheek gently. “Good-bye, Madame. I leave her in your hands.”

He touched her hand also, and was gone, without looking back at me.

“You have chosen to come to me at once, Ines, and to begin work?” Madame asked me, after a pause.

“Yes, Madame.”

“Good! I have much for you to do. There are certain conditions laid down by Mr. Arkwright. Those must receive our first consideration. I will explain them to you later. For the rest, he gives us *carte blanche* to study what we please. A man in a thousand!” she concluded, in a sort of pious rapture. “And now, my child, to your room. Your luggage will have been taken there. We dine at half-past

seven. Two friends of mine are coming. Do not dress more than usual."

Silently I turned away. Madame was unbendingly determined to have no drivelling sentimentality—and she was right.

END OF VOL. I.





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